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A COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S FIRST  
EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

*By the Rev.*  
*ALFRED PLUMMER, D.D.*

A COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S SECOND  
EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

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# A COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

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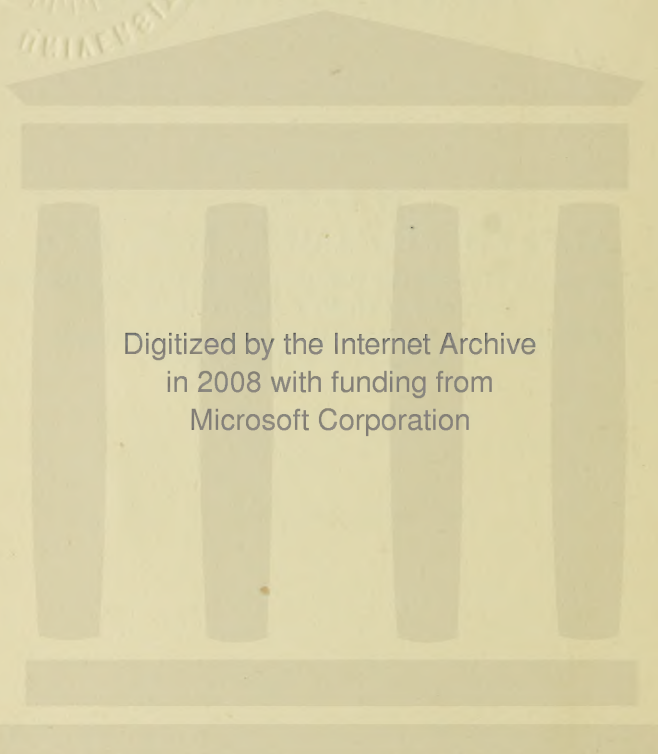

Author of "An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel  
according to St. Matthew," etc.

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## INTRODUCTION

### I. THESSALONICA

THE Epistles to the Thessalonians do not tell us a great deal about the city in which these most interesting converts of the Apostle of the Gentiles lived ; but what they tell us harmonizes very well with what we learn from other sources.

The passage of the Gospel from Asia to Europe is a momentous event in the history of the Apostolic Age ; and it took place when St. Paul, in obedience to what he believed to be a Divine command, ' set sail from Troas ' and came ' to Philippi, which is a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony ' (Acts xvi. 8-14). To us this means the spread of Christianity from one continent to another. But that is not the way in which it is regarded in the N.T., in which the word ' Europe ' does not occur, and in which ' Asia ' never means the continent of Asia. The Apostle of the Gentiles and his historian, St. Luke, seem rather to have regarded the event as a passage from Eastern to Western civilization, an advance from a world in which the best elements had centred in Judaism to a world in which the best elements were found in the art and thought of Greece, and in the political and military organization of Rome.

" Westward the course of empire takes its way " (*Bishop Berkeley*).

It was neither to Europe in general, nor to any particular city, that the Apostle was invited to come and render help, but to Macedonia ; and the Macedonians, although they were looked down upon by the pure Greeks, were morally more promising material for missionaries to work upon than

their more brilliant and attractive neighbours in Achaia. As Mommsen says :

“ While in Greece proper the moral and political energy of the people had decayed, there still existed in Northern Greece a goodly proportion of the old national vigour which had produced the warriors of Marathon. This sturdy vigour and unimpaired national spirit were turned to peculiarly good account by the Macedonians, as the most powerful and best organized of the states of northern Greece. The people still felt itself independent and free. In stedfast resistance to the public enemy under whatever name, in unshaken fidelity towards their native country and their hereditary government, and in persevering courage amidst the severest trials, no nation in ancient history bears so close a resemblance to the Roman people as the Macedonians ; and the almost miraculous regeneration of the state after the Gallic invasion redounds to the imperishable honour of its leaders and of the people whom they led ” (*History of Rome*, Bk. III. ch. viii. *sub init.*).

It is possible that the fact of the Apostle's beginning his new mission at Philippi was due simply to his having chosen as his means of transit to Macedonia a ship that was bound for Neapolis, which was the seaport of Philippi, from which it is about ten miles distant. Having landed there, he saw the advantages which Philippi possessed as a missionary centre. But it is more probable that he aimed at Philippi from the first, and that he chose his ship accordingly. Its advantages for the Apostle's purpose were threefold. It was a Roman colony, and its inhabitants, like St. Paul himself, had the rights and privileges of Roman citizens. It was on the Via Egnatia, the great high road between East and West, right across the North of the Hellenic peninsula, from Dyrrhachium on the Adriatic to the mouth of the Hebrus. And it had, what was essential from the missionary's point of view, a settlement of Jews, to whom the Gospel must first be preached. The settlement was a small one, for it had no synagogue, but only ‘ a place of prayer ’ (*προσευχή*), near the river Gangites ; but it sufficed. When



Paul and Silas, after the outrageous treatment which they received from the mob and the praetors of Philippi, decided to leave the place, they went rather more than 100 miles farther West to a city which had similar advantages.

As Professor von Dobschütz rightly observes: "Christianity, on account of the whole of its previous history and its origin, could not dispense with the synagogue as its starting-point" (*The Apostolic Age*, p. 47). Hence the comparative failure of the Apostle's preaching at Athens (Acts xvii. 32-34).

Thessalonica, like Philippi, was on the great Egnatian Road. It had a settlement of Jews large enough to have a synagogue, 'the desired synagogue' (ἡ συναγωγή), as St. Luke calls it (Acts xvii. 1). Although it was not a Roman colony, it was a free city, a privilege which was conferred upon it for having sided with Octavius and Antony in the second civil war. Coins exist which bear the inscription, 'Thessalonica the free.' Moreover it was a seaport, so that it was a travel and trade route between East and West both by land and by sea. It was doubtless because of its great advantages as a commercial centre that so many Jews had settled there, and have continued to settle there all through its history.

It is nothing more than a coincidence, but the coincidence is worth noting, that both these Macedonian towns, which became cities under Roman rule, seem to have owed their origin, or at any rate their original name, to their water-supply. The original name of Philippi was Crenides (Κρηνίδες), 'Wells' or 'Fountains': and the original name of Thessalonica was Therma (Θέρμα), 'Hotspring,' from the hot springs of salt water, which are still found in the neighbourhood. These primitive names might seem to anticipate the gracious fact that both towns were to become the places where 'wells of water, springing up unto eternal life' (John iv. 14), and 'fountains of waters of life' (Rev. vii. 17), would, for the first time in the Western world, be found. In later ages Thessalonica was successful in converting many members of the barbarous and pagan hordes which came

down upon it ; and it was so staunch in upholding traditional beliefs that it was known as " the Orthodox City."

It was about B.C. 315 that Cassander, son of Antipater, turned the small town of Therma into a large city by sweeping into it the inhabitants of other towns and villages and enriching it with fine buildings. He gave it the name of Thessalonica after the name of his wife, who was the daughter of Philip of Macedon and the half-sister of Alexander. At the time when Macedonia was divided into four parts, Thessalonica was the capital of the second. When these divisions were abolished, it became the metropolis of the whole. Along the whole extent of the Egnatian Road there was no city so important or so influential as Thessalonica. Gibbon (ch. xvii. note 21) says that " before the foundation of Constantinople Thessalonica is mentioned by Cedrenus (p. 283) as the intended capital " (Smith's Milman's *Gibbon*, II. p. 292). Wealthy Romans often resided there. Cicero, who chose it as a home during the time of his exile (*Pro Planc.* 41), says that its inhabitants were " in the lap of our Empire." Many of its inhabitants, nearly all of whom were heathen, were engaged in trade and were well-to-do, as probably were most of the Jews, whose synagogue had attracted a considerable number of proselytes. But no doubt the majority earned their living by manual labour, as did the Apostle and his colleagues during their stay (ii. 9). Hence we find that among the first converts were some Jews, many ' God-fearers ', and a considerable number of women from the upper classes (Acts xvii. 4). The ' God-fearers ' were not proselytes, but religious heathen, who attended the synagogue and admired the Jewish Law. Whether these women were Macedonians or Jewesses, or whether they were the wives of heathen, or of proselytes, or of Jews, it is impossible to determine. Lightfoot (*Philippians*, pp. 55-57) has shown that women in Macedonia probably had a better social position than elsewhere in the civilized world. " At Philippi, at Thessalonica, at Beroea, the women take an active part with the Apostle. . . . The active zeal of the women in this country is a remarkable

fact, without a parallel in the Apostle's history elsewhere." But a little later in his work at Thessalonica the large majority of converts were heathen (i. 9), who worked with their hands for a living (iv. 11 ; 2 Thess. iii. 10-12). Among the Jews were Aristarchus (Acts xx. 4 ; Col. iv. 10) and in all probability Jason (Acts xvii. 5, 6 ; cf. Rom. xvi. 21).

As a free city, Thessalonica had the privilege of electing its own magistrates, to whom St. Luke gives the title of 'Politarchs' (πολιτάρχαι, Acts xvii. 6, 8). This title for 'the rulers of the city' is found in no classical author, and the use of it was urged by Baur, Zeller, and others as a reason for questioning the accuracy of Luke's narrative. But the accuracy has been abundantly vindicated by the evidence of seventeen inscriptions, thirteen of which are attributed to Macedonia, five being from Thessalonica. The most famous of these five is now in the British Museum. It was taken from the Roman triumphal arch, now destroyed, which crossed the Via Egnatia near the Vardar gate. It contains these words : "The Politarchs being *Sosipater* son of Cleopatra and *Lucius Pontius Secundus*, *Publius Flavius Sabinus*, *Demetrius* son of *Faustus*, *Demetrius* of *Nicopolis*, *Zoilus* son of *Parmenio* also called *Meniscus*, *Gaius Agilleius Politus*." It is a curious coincidence that three of the names should be those of three of St. Paul's friends, Sopater of Beroea (Acts xx. 4), Secundus of Thessalonica (xx. 4), and Gaius of Macedonia (xix. 29). See Conybeare and Howson, ch. ix. ; Cook (*Speaker's Commentary*), Knowling (*Expositor's Greek Testament*), and Rackham (*Oxford Commentaries*) on Acts xvii. 6 ; Lewin, *Fasti Sacri*, p. 294 § 1767 ; Tozer, *Highlands of Turkey*, I. pp. 143-145, II. p. 358 ; Zahn, *Introd. to N.T.*, I. p. 211 ; E. de Witt Burton, *American Journal of Theology*, July, 1898, pp. 598-632, where the whole of the seventeen inscriptions are collected. *Sosipater* (Rom. xvi. 21) is the same name as Sopater.

Like so many cities which are seaports, Thessalonica had an evil reputation for licentiousness, which was augmented by the wanton rites connected with the worship of the Cabiri (Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, p. 257). Cities



which were great commercial centres had a strange mixture of populations and were the homes of many strange cults. Hence the necessity for the special warnings given by the Apostle (iv. 1-8). His subsequent relations with the converts at Thessalonica are not recorded. He almost certainly visited the city again after the uproar at Ephesus, perhaps more than once (Acts xx. 1 f.). But of this we have no express information. Our knowledge of the first century becomes sensibly less after the passage of the Gospel into Europe.

## II. AUTHENTICITY

Fifty or sixty years ago the genuineness of 1 Thessalonians was seriously doubted by many scholars, largely owing to the influence of the Tübingen School; to which, however, while in this matter, as in many other points, we have to dissent from its conclusions, we owe much gratitude for its suggestiveness, sincerity, and courage. Baur's objections to 1 Thessalonians are now generally admitted to be, in some cases inadequate, or even baseless, in others, arguments in favour of its authenticity. Thus, to say that it has "no special aim, and no intelligible occasion or purpose" is contrary to plain facts; and "the insignificance of its contents," and the almost total "absence of any dogmatic idea whatever," so far from being an objection, show that there could be little inducement to any one to compose such a letter and attribute it to St. Paul. See Zahn, *Introd. to N.T.*, I. p. 248. Baur notes coincidences with other Pauline Epistles, but uses these to disprove Pauline authorship. He holds that a genuine letter must be Pauline, but not too Pauline. If there are no parallels with St. Paul's acknowledged Epistles, St. Paul did not write it; if there are many parallels in thought or language, we have a forger imitating the Apostle! See Salmon, *Introd. to N.T.*, 3rd. ed. p. 387. With the exception of Van Manen and a small group of eccentric Dutch critics, who contend that we possess no genuine Epistles of St. Paul, the Pauline authorship of

1 Thessalonians is now almost universally admitted. It may suffice to mention the names of Bacon, Börnemann, Clemen, Drummond, Frame, Harnack, Hilgenfeld, Jowett, Jülicher, McGiffert, Martineau, Moffatt, Renan, Sabatier, Schmiedel, Von Dobschütz, Von Soden, Weizsäcker, Wendt, Westrik.

The brevity of the Epistle and the character of its contents render it a somewhat unlikely field for quotations ; and it need not surprise us that it is not quoted by name by any writer earlier than Irenaeus (c. 185 A.D.). There are three passages in Clement of Rome (*Cor.* xxxviii. 1, 4, xlii. 3, 4), and three in Ignatius (*Rom.* ii. 1, 4, *Eph.* x. 1, *Pol.* i. 3) which may possibly be reminiscences, but not much reliance can be put upon them. Two supposed references in Polycarp (ii. 2, iv. 3) are also unsatisfactory (Lightfoot in Smith's *D.B.*, III. p. 1480). Hermas (*Vis.* III. ix. 10) presents rather stronger resemblance, but the resemblance may be mere coincidence. Perhaps the strongest external evidence in support of 1 Thessalonians is supplied by 2 Thessalonians, which (whoever be the author) throughout implies the Pauline authorship of the First Epistle. We may add to this the fact that 1 Thessalonians is included in the Canon of Marcion (c. 140 A.D.) and in the Muratorian Fragment (c. 170), as well as in the Syriac Vulgate and the Old Latin Versions. After Irenaeus quotations from it abound.

This adequate external evidence is supported by very strong evidence derived from the letter itself, the simplicity and naturalness of which are very convincing. The language tells of an affectionate teacher, most anxious about the way in which his beloved converts, who are still only imperfectly instructed, are bearing the strain of prolonged and severe persecution. This anxiety is increased by the fact that, during the enforced absence of the Apostle, his enemies have been trying to calumniate him and his colleagues, and to shake the Thessalonians' confidence in their teachers. It would require a very skilful inventor to imagine the peculiar circumstances, and then compose a

letter, with this sincerity of tone, to fit them. Early Christian forgeries, such as the correspondence between Abgarus, King of Edessa, and our Lord, and the letter of the Corinthians to St. Paul with a third Epistle from him to them, do not encourage us to believe that any such fineness of conception and expression existed among the believers of the first few centuries, or even later. On the contrary, their clumsiness is so great that we wonder how any one could ever have believed that they were genuine. Moreover, it is impossible to find in this letter any motive for such invention. It contains no polemical or controversial matter, for the sake of introducing which under the authority of an Apostle a forger might have been induced to set to work.

This forger is supposed to have gone to Acts for his facts. This is difficult to believe, for in important particulars the letter is rather seriously at variance with Acts. In Acts the converts are Jews or proselytes ; nothing is said about heathen. In the letter the converts are heathen ; nothing is said about Jews (see on i. 9). In Acts the mission seems to have lasted only three weeks ; the letter shows that it must have continued for several months (see on i. 9 and ii. 9). Again, it is difficult to reconcile what the letter tells us about the movements of Silvanus and Timothy with what we are told about them in Acts (see on iii. 1). Evidently the writer of this letter had not seen Acts, and the writer of Acts had not seen this letter. " It is capricious to pronounce the epistle a colourless imitation, if it agrees with Acts, and unauthentic, if it disagrees " (Moffatt). It is equally clear that it is not a mere imitation of the Corinthian letters.

There is yet another point. If the letter is a forgery, it cannot have been published until St. Paul was dead ; and in that case the writer would not have represented the Apostle as classing himself with those who would be alive at the time of the Second Advent (see on iv. 15). See Jowett, Introduction to 1 Thessalonians, pp. 18-29, and McGiffert in *Enc. Bibl.*, IV. 5041.



### III. PLACE AND DATE

The Place is certainly Corinth. St. Paul had gone to Athens (iii. 1) and left Athens for Corinth, where Silvanus and Timothy rejoined him, and where he stayed for about eighteen months (Acts xvii. 15, xviii. 1, 5, 11). It was in the earlier half of this period that he wrote the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. The exact year cannot be fixed with certainty, and the year which we select will depend upon the years selected for a variety of events connected with the life of St. Paul. Almost all chronologers allow of some play. The Epistle must be placed after the so-called Council of Jerusalem, and it can hardly be placed earlier than A.D. 49 or later than A.D. 53. Perhaps A.D. 51 is the most probable year. Harnack says 48-50; Turner, 50-52; Ramsay, 51-53; Lightfoot and Wieseler, 52-53; Lewin, 52; Milligan, 50-51; a few place it as early as 47-48, and a few as late as 54-55.

### IV. IMPORTANCE

Unless the hypothesis that the Epistle to the Galatians is earlier is correct,—and at present the large majority of scholars find difficulty in accepting that hypothesis,—1 Thessalonians is the earliest among the Pauline Epistles, and almost certainly the earliest of the Books of the N.T. Some place the Epistle of St. James first, and some the Gospel according to St. Mark; but with the large majority of critics the First Epistle to the Thessalonians still holds the first place. Those who would put Galatians in front of it are not agreed as to whether that Epistle was written before or after the Council at Jerusalem. Most place it after the Council, and select either Antioch, or Athens, or Corinth as the place at which it was written. Zahn and Rendall and others decide for Corinth, and that view brings the date of Galatians within a month or two, at the outside of the date of 1 Thessalonians. If that were correct, the difference in tone between the two letters would be most

extraordinary. Attempts have been made to find a few points of resemblance between the two, but they are not very successful.

But to whichever of the two Epistles we give the priority, 1 Thessalonians, more than any other Book in the N.T., tells us the kind of instruction which St. Paul was in the habit of giving to the *heathen*; and, as coming from the Apostle himself, it is a more valuable piece of information in this respect than the speeches at Lystra and at Athens, as reported by St. Luke. Although, consciously or unconsciously, he sometimes uses the language of the LXX, yet he nowhere quotes the O.T., which would have little interest for imperfectly instructed Macedonian converts. Nor does he ever call Jesus the Son of Man, which to them might seem a strange title. There is also truth in the remark that 1 Thessalonians is the least dogmatic among the Epistles of St. Paul. Babies in Christ, newly won over from idolatry, need simple and pure religion rather than reasoned and systematized theology. But to call the letter "undogmatic" would be misleading; study of it shows that the missionaries must have taught a great deal of doctrine, so much is assumed as known. They have two things to which they can appeal; the excellence of the message which they have brought, and the transparent sincerity and disinterestedness with which it has been preached. The Thessalonians themselves knew what had been said and done by the three missionaries, and God knew what their motives had been. The writers could appeal with perfect confidence to both.

In his manner of dealing with these converts from paganism the Apostle reveals a great deal of his own marvellous personality, with its deep affection, sympathy, and sensitiveness, and its rapidly changing emotions.\* As in

\* The words in which a recent Jewish writer commends the Epistles of St. Paul to his Jewish brethren are worth quoting. "We can appreciate, and be stimulated by, those wonderful passages in which the Apostle speaks of his own feelings and experiences. We cannot but be struck by his remarkable combination of humility and confidence, by his fortitude and enthusiasm, his indomitable

2 Corinthians, thankfulness, love, anxiety, and entreaty on the one side ; on the other, when the Jewish opponents are uppermost in his thoughts, indignation and severity. See Chase, *Credibility of the Acts* (Hulsean Lectures, 1900), pp. 197, 230, 244, 246.

The whole Epistle shows that the good seed had fallen on good soil in Thessalonica. Although the growth had been rapid, the roots had gone deep, and the young plants had stood the scorching test of persecution. There were some thorns and briars which needed to be eradicated, and the Apostle points them out ; with the hope that the converts have the will and the strength to get rid of this refuse, which has survived their emancipation from paganism.

The letter was written to deal with this particular crisis in the career of the young Church of Thessalonica, not to instruct us as to the character or the methods of St. Paul. But it is only when we take these also into account that we obtain an adequate idea of the importance of what is probably the earliest piece of Christian literature that has come down to us.

#### IV. OCCASION

It was during what is commonly called his Second Missionary Journey, and after the beating and imprisonment at Philippi, that St. Paul came along the Egnatian Road to Thessalonica, accompanied by Silas, and probably by Timothy : but Timothy may have joined him there a little later. For about three weeks he laboured among the Jews

perseverance, his high spirits (to use a homely expression), undaunted by difficulties, troubles and pain. There is always something inspiring in the picture of a great man, convinced of his cause, and pursuing his straight course in the face of constant opposition and trial. Paul not only rises superior to his sufferings, but he exults and rejoices in them. And perhaps in this exultation and rejoicing lies the most peculiar and instructive feature of his career, the feature in which he was in fullest accordance with the teaching of his Master and Lord " (C. G. Montefiore, *Judaism and St. Paul*, pp. 200 f.).



and 'God-fearers' who attended the worship in the synagogue in which the missionaries preached. Here Luke's account of the mission to Thessalonica ends. He passes at once to the withdrawal of the missionaries from the city, owing to the machinations of the unconverted Jews, who stirred up the rabble to mob them and denounce them before the Politarchs. The missionaries had preached Jesus as the Messiah-King who was coming again to found the Messianic Kingdom. It was therefore easy to represent them to the Politarchs as dangerous ringleaders who were preaching rebellion against Caesar. Their non-appearance to answer this charge of course told against them, and it was impossible for the magistrates to ignore so serious an accusation. But they seem to have had a suspicion that it was dictated by animus rather than loyalty. The sentence which they pronounced was a light one. Jason, who had sheltered the missionaries, and other converts, who had been prominent in support of them, were made to pledge themselves that there should be no further trouble. The exact meaning of this pledge is uncertain, but it probably means that Jason and his companions had to deposit a sum of money, as security that they themselves would appear in court, when called upon to do so. In consequence of this pledge, they sent the missionaries away by night to the quieter and more secluded city of Beroea.

It is clear from 1 Thessalonians and Philippians that St. Luke has missed out a great deal, either because he did not know it, or thought it of minor importance, or had not room for it. The mission in Thessalonica lasted a good deal more than three or four weeks; and so many heathen were converted, in addition to Jews, 'God-fearers' and chief women, that Gentiles formed the bulk of the Thessalonian Church. Their conversion must have taken some time. More time is required for the converts to sound out the word in Macedonia and Achaia and beyond (i. 8). It is evident that at Thessalonica the Apostle acted as he did at Pisidian Antioch, where, after preaching for two or more Sabbaths to the Jews, he turned to the Gentiles (Acts xiii.

46-49). At Ephesus, after teaching in the synagogue for three months, he preached for two years to mixed multitudes (xix. 8-10). Moreover, it would scarcely have been necessary for the missionaries to work night and day for their maintenance, or (if they did so) to call attention to it, if they remained in the place only three or four weeks (ii. 9). Still less would it have been necessary for the Philippians, more than once, to send supplies to them (Phil. iv. 15, 16).

At Beroea the missionaries were at first welcomed; and many Jews, with not a few Greek women of honourable estate and Greek men, believed. But fanatical Jews of Thessalonica came and again caused trouble. The Apostle's friends took St. Paul to the sea coast, and some of them came on with him, probably by sea, to Athens; Silas and Timothy being left behind at Beroea, whither orders were sent to them from Athens that they were to rejoin the Apostle as soon as possible (Acts xvii. 11-15). Timothy did so. He rejoined St. Paul at Athens, and was sent by him back to Thessalonica, whither the Apostle himself had much wished to return, but on two occasions had been prevented from doing so (ii. 17), possibly by a return of the malady which he called a 'messenger of Satan' (2 Cor. xii. 7). See Rackham on Acts xvii. 9. During Timothy's absence St. Paul went on from Athens to Corinth, and soon all three missionaries were once more reunited there. What Silas had been doing since he was left behind at Beroea we do not know. Possibly he, like Timothy, had rejoined the Apostle at Athens, and thence, like Timothy, had been sent off again on a mission. But both returned to St. Paul at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5), where all three took part in sending 1 Thessalonians (i. 1).

The Epistle is the result of the favourable report brought by Timothy from Thessalonica. The new converts had been behaving well in spite of much persecution, and in spite of open calumnies and subtle insinuations persistently made against the missionaries since their flight. These attacks would come partly from the friends and relations of the Greeks who had been converted, but chiefly from the Jews

in Thessalonica, who, like most of their brethren everywhere, were utterly opposed to the spread of the Gospel. That there were Judaizing Christians at Thessalonica, such as caused so much trouble in Galatia and at Corinth, is not probable. There is no hint of any such influence either in 1 Thessalonians or in Acts.

The main object of 1 Thessalonians is to answer these false charges and suggestions, which would be fatal to mission work in Macedonia, if they were believed. The second object, also very important, is to encourage the Thessalonians to persevere and make progress. They were still defective in purity, brotherly love, and orderly discipline; and they needed further instruction in doctrine, especially with regard to the Resurrection and Christ's Return. But with regard to both life and doctrine the Apostle's aim is not so much to convert as to confirm. The eager preacher has become the anxious pastor, all the more anxious as having to tend a deeply interesting and promising flock, which was beset by troubles from without and from within. As it was impossible for the Apostle to come himself to repel accusations and to continue his teaching, he sends a letter, which is evidently not a first attempt. It does not read like the composition of a beginner, and 2 Thess. iii. 17 implies that St. Paul had had much practice.

There is no clear hint in the Epistle that the Thessalonians had written to the Apostle before Timothy was sent back to them, or that they had sent a letter by him when he returned to make his report of the Thessalonian Church. That no letter of theirs to St. Paul is mentioned in iii. 6-8 is rather strong evidence that no such letter was sent. It has been thought that the 'also' in 'we also' (ii. 13) implies that the Thessalonians had written. The 'also,' as is shown in the notes, may be interpreted in more ways than one; but none of the interpretations necessarily requires the hypothesis of a letter from Thessalonica to the Apostle. Of course, if the hypothesis of such a letter is accepted, it is not difficult to construct a series of questions to which portions of 1 Thessalonians might be an answer. A similar



letter of inquiry might be constructed to fit Philippians, but it would go very little way towards proving that any such letter had been written.

## V. CONTENTS

(a) The letter is written in the fulness of the Apostle's joy, affection, and anxiety, and has no carefully considered arrangement. It follows the lines of letter-writing which were usual at that time, and the topics follow in a natural, but probably not previously considered, order. There are two main divisions, which are preceded by a general address, and are followed by an Apostolic conclusion.

### I. THE SALUTATION, i. 1.

### II. HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL. *A Review of the Missionaries' Recent Relations with the Thessalonians*, i. 2—iii. 13.

1. Thanksgiving for the Fruits of their Conversion. i. 2—10.
2. How the Missionaries acted at Thessalonica. ii. 1—12.
3. Renewed Thanksgiving for the Conversion of the Thessalonians, and for their Patience under Persecution. ii. 13—16.
4. The Writers' Anxiety about their Converts, until reassured by Timothy. ii. 17—iii. 10.
5. Prayer for the Thessalonians. iii. 11—13.

### III. HORTATORY AND DOCTRINAL. *A Review of the Converts' Shortcomings and a Supplement to the Missionaries' Teaching*. iv. 1—v. 24.

1. Exhortations to Purity, to Love of the Brethren, and to Honest Work. iv. 1—12.
2. Concerning them that fall asleep before the Advent of the Lord. iv. 13—18.
3. The Uncertainty of the Time of the Advent and the Need of Watchfulness. v. 1—11.

4. Exhortations respecting Church Discipline and Holiness of Life. v. 12-22.
5. Prayer for the Thessalonians. v. 23, 24.

#### IV. CONCLUDING CHARGES AND BENEDICTION. v. 25-28.

##### (b) *Reminiscences of the Septuagint.*

There is no doubt that St. Paul was very familiar with the language of the LXX. When he handled religious topics in Greek, the language of the O.T. would come naturally to him as a means of expression.\* Sometimes he deliberately selected the wording of the LXX and adapted it to his purpose. But very often (we may suppose) words and phrases of the LXX occurred to him without effort on his part; and here and there, perhaps, what looks like a reminiscence may be a mere accident of language. Single words do not prove much, unless either the word is an unusual one or the general sense of the two passages is similar. Thus ἐξήχεται (i. 8) and ἐξήχησαν (Joel iii. 14) need have no connexion; and much the same might be said of εἴσοδον (i. 9) and εἴσοδον (2 Kings xix. 27). Even ἀναμένειν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν (i. 10) has only a superficial resemblance to ἀνεμείναμεν κρίσιν (Isa. lix. 11): to wait hopefully for the Son's Return is a different thing from waiting in vain for Divine favour. There is more to be said for the similarity between ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ ἢ πίστις ὑμῶν ἐξελέλυθεν (i. 8) and εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν ἐξήλθεν ὁ φθόγγος αὐτῶν (Ps. xix. 4), or between Ἰησοῦν τὸν ῥυόμενον ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῆς ὀργῆς τῆς ἐρχομένης (i. 10) and σὺ εἶ ὁ ῥυόμενος ἐκ παντὸς κακοῦ (Wisd. xvi. 8), for although in each pair only one word is the same, yet in each there is general resemblance between the two passages. See also notes on i. 9.

But there are six or seven cases in which the resemblances between words in the Epistle and words in the LXX are

\* See Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, pp. 403, 404.

of a more decided character, and in which it is fairly safe to believe that the Apostle is consciously using the language of the Greek Version of the O.T. Scriptures.

I *Thessalonians.**Septuagint.*

- ii. 4. Θεὸς τῷ δοκιμάζοντι τὰς καρδίας ἡμῶν. Jer. xii. 3. σὺ, Κύριε, γινώσκεις με, δεδοκίμακας τὴν καρδίαν μου. Cf. xi. 20; Ps. xvi. (xvii.) 3; Prov. xvii. 3.
- ii. 16. εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι αὐτῶν τὰς ἀμαρτίας. Gen. xv. 16. οὐπω γὰρ ἀναπληρῶνται αἱ ἀμαρτίαι τῶν Ἀμορραίων ἕως τοῦ νῦν.
- ii. 19. στέφανος καυχήσεως. Prov. xvi. 31. στέφανος καυχήσεως. Cf. Ezek. xvi. 12, xxiii. 42.
- iv. 5. τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα τὸν Θεόν. Ps. lxxviii. (lxxix.) 6. ἔνθη τὰ μὴ ἐπεγνώκῳτα σε. Jer. x. 25. ἔθνη τὰ μὴ εἰδότα σε. Cf. ix. 3.
- iv. 6. ἔκδικος Κύριος περὶ πάντων τούτων. Deut. xxxii. 35. ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ἐκδικήσεως ἀνταποδώσω. Ps. xciii. (xciv.) 1. ὁ Θεὸς ἐκδικήσεων Κύριος, ὁ Θεὸς ἐκδικήσεων ἐπαρρησιάζατο.
- iv. 8. τὸν Θεὸν τὸν διδόντα τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ τὸ ἅγιον εἰς ὑμᾶς. Ezek. xxxvii. 14. καὶ δώσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου εἰς ὑμᾶς.



- v. 8. ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως καὶ ἀγάπης καὶ περικεφαλαίαν ἐλπίδα σωτηρίας. Isa. lix. 17. καὶ ἐνεδύσατο δικαιοσύνην ὡς θώρακα, καὶ περιέθετο περικεφαλαίαν σωτηρίου ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς.
- Wisd. v. 18. ἐνδύσεται θώρακα δικαιοσύνην.
- v. 22. ἀπὸ παντὸς ἔδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε. Job i. 1. ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ πράγματος.
- Job ii. 3. ἀπεχόμενος ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ.

None of these are direct quotations ; and it is not certain that in all the eight cases there is conscious adaptation of the language of the LXX. The last might be an accidental similarity of wording.

(c) *Reminiscences of Sayings of Christ.*

Possible reminiscences of our Lord's words are fairly frequent, especially in the last chapter ; and probable reminiscences are frequent enough to render it improbable that all the similarities between the utterances of the Apostle and those of Christ are mere coincidences. Assuming that in some cases St. Paul is consciously reproducing Sayings which are attributed to our Lord in the Gospels, the question arises, Whence did the Apostle acquire his knowledge ? The most probable source is the oral tradition, which preceded our Gospels, and continued to be a means of instruction for some time after the Gospels were published. But it is not impossible that for some of the Sayings which St. Paul seems to have in his mind he had a written source. This written source could not well be any of our four Gospels, for it is certain that Mt., Lk., and Jn. were not yet written, and it is extremely improbable that

Mk. was already published, although a few scholars are disposed to believe that it was. It will be observed that hardly any of the passages in this Epistle which might be echoes of Christ's Sayings are possible echoes of those which are found only in Mk.\* It is, however, quite possible that the lost document (the existence of which is now generally assumed), which was largely used by both Mt. and Lk., but hardly at all (if indeed at all) by Mk., was known to St. Paul and may have influenced his language. This lost document, commonly called Q, seems to have been mainly a collection of the Sayings of Christ, with just enough narrative to make the Sayings intelligible. The question is interesting, but it is not of great importance. There is not very much difference between an oral tradition, which has become fixed in wording, and the same or very similar tradition, which has been committed to writing. Very few of the apparent reminiscences of Christ's words in this Epistle resemble those in the Gospels so closely as to render quotation from a written document necessary. All of them are so brief that they might easily have been preserved orally. The strongest examples may be taken first; and for purposes of comparison it will suffice to use the Revised Version.

\* In the Second Epistle all the probable reminiscences are of Sayings recorded in Mt. or Lk.; not one seems to come from what is recorded by Mk., and most are from the apocalyptic utterances in Mt. xxiv. Compare i. 5 with Lk. xx. 35, i. 7 with Lk. xvii. 30, ii. 1 with Mt. xxiv. 31, ii. 2 with Mt. xxiv. 6, ii. 3 with Mt. xxiv. 4, 12, ii. 4 with Mt. xxiv. 15, ii. 9 with Mt. xxiv. 24, ii. 11 with Mt. xxiv. 4. Harnack asserts that "no one will be able to prove that Mk. made use of Q" (*The Sayings of Jesus*, p. 226).

With regard to the probability of St. Paul having made use of it, Lightfoot's words on v. 2 may be quoted: "Had such a written gospel existed and been circulated by St. Paul, he could scarcely have referred to his oral teaching in preference five years later in 1 Cor. xi. 23 f., xv. 1, when a reference to the written document would have been decisive."

I *Thessalonians.*

ii. 14-16. The Jews ; who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drave us out (*ἐκδιωξάντων*) . . . to fill up their sins alway.

iv. 8. He that rejecteth, rejecteth not man, but God.

v. 2. The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

v. 3. Then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child.

v. 5. Ye are all sons of light.

v. 6. So then . . . let us watch (*ἄρα οὖν . . . γρηγορῶμεν*).

v. 7. They that be drunken are drunken in the night.

*Gospels.*

Mt. xxiii. 31-34. Ye are the sons of them that slew the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. . . . I send unto you prophets . . . some of them ye shall persecute (*διώξετε*) from city to city.

Cf. Lk. xi. 49, 50.

Lk. x. 16. He that rejecteth you rejecteth me ; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth Him that sent me.

Mt. xxiv. 43. If the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming.

Cf. Lk. xii. 39.

Lk. xxi. 34. Lest haply . . . that day come on you suddenly as a snare.

Cf. Lk. xvii. 26-30.

Lk. xvi. 8. The sons of light, Cf. Jn. xii. 36.

Mt. xxiv. 42. Watch therefore (*γρηγορεῖτε οὖν*).

Mt. xxiv. 48, 49. If that evil servant . . . shall eat and drink with the drunken.

Cf. Lk. xii. 45.

The cumulative effect of these seven parallels is considerable ; and it is increased by the existence of other cases in which the similarity between St. Paul's words and



the Sayings in the Gospels is less striking than in these seven.

*I Thessalonians.*

ii. 12. God who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory.

iii. 13. At the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints (*τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ*).

iv. 16. With the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.

iv. 17. to meet the Lord.

v. 1. But of the times and the seasons.

v. 13. Be at peace among yourselves.

v. 15. See that none render unto any one evil for evil.

*Gospels.*

Mt. xxii. 3. Sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage.

Cf. Lk. xiv. 17.

Mt. xvi. 27. The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels (*τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ*).

Mk. viii. 38. *τῶν ἀγγέλων τῶν ἁγίων.*

Lk. ix. 26. *τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων.*

Mt. xxiv. 31. He shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet.

Cf. Mk. xiii. 26, 27 ; Lk. xxi. 27.

Mt. xxv. 6. Come ye forth to meet him.

Mk. xiii. 32. But of that day or that hour.

Mt. xxiv. 36. But of that day and hour.

Mk. ix. 50. Be at peace one with another.

Mt. v. 39. Resist not him that is evil.

Cf. Lk. vi. 27-29.

From these fourteen instances, which do not exhaust all the possibilities, we may safely infer that either through the oral tradition, which he would derive direct from some

of the Twelve, or from some written document, St. Paul was familiar with many of the utterances of our Lord.

The Christology of the Epistle appears only incidentally, and for that reason is all the more decisive. In four places (i. 3, v. 9, 23, 28) we have the full expression, 'our Lord Jesus Christ.' The frequent title, 'the Lord,' implies a great deal. Side by side with the Father, 'our Lord Jesus' is addressed in prayer (iii. 11). He 'died for us' (v. 10; cf. ii. 15), and was 'raised from the dead' (i. 10, iv. 14). He is in Heaven, whence He will come again to gather to Himself both quick and dead (iv. 16-18, v. 10).

## VI. COMMENTARIES

Only a selection is given here. A very full list will be found in the excellent commentary by Professor J. E. Frame, who has had the advantage of coming last in a very distinguished list. In the following summary foreign works which have been translated into English are inserted in the English list.

### ON THE GREEK TEXT.

#### *Patristic.*

Greek. Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, Oecumenius.\*

Latin. Ambrosiaster, Pelagius.

#### *Reformers.*

Latin. Calvin, wingli, Musculus.

\* For information see H. B. Swete, *Patristic Study*, and C. H. Turner, "Patristic Commentaries," in *Hastings' DB.* V. pp. 484 f. Chrysostom's eleven Homilies on 1 Thessalonians are not reckoned among his best; but they are fairly often quoted, and most of the passages thus distinguished are given in these notes.

*Modern.*

- Bengel, *Gnomon N.T.*, 1742 ; tr. 1857, 1860.  
 Webster and Wilkinson, 1855-1861.  
 Lillie, 1856 (American).  
 Alford, 1857, 5th ed. 1871.  
 Olshausen, 1830 ; tr. 1858.  
 Jowett, 1859.  
 C. Wordsworth, 1859.  
 Eadie, 1877.  
 Lüneman, 1850 (in Meyer) ; tr. 1880.  
 Ellicott, 1880.  
 Lightfoot, 1895 (Posthumous, in *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul*).  
 Findlay, 1904 (*Cambridge Greek Testament*).  
 B. Weiss, 1902 ; tr. 1906.  
 Milligan, 1908.  
 Moffatt, 1910 (*Expositor's Greek Testament*).  
 Frame, 1912 (*International Critical Commentary*).

## ON THE ENGLISH VERSIONS.

- Mason (*Ellicott's Com. for English Readers*).  
 Alexander, 1881 (*Speaker's Commentary*).  
 Marcus Dods, 1882 (*Schaff's Popular Com.*).  
 Gloag, 1887 (*Pulpit Commentary*).  
 Findlay (1891) (*Cambridge Bible*).  
 Denney, 1892 (*Expositor's Bible*).  
 Bartlet, 1902 (*Temple Bible*).  
 Adeney (*New Century Bible*).

*New Translations into English.*

- The Twentieth Century New Testament*, 1900.  
 Weymouth, *The N.T. in Modern Speech*, 1905.  
 Way, *The Letters of St. Paul*, 2nd. ed. 1906.  
 Rutherford (Posthumous), *Thessalonians and Corinthians*, 1908.  
 Moffatt, *The N.T., a New Translation*, 1913.



Cunnington, *The New Covenant*, 1914.

There are valuable articles on the Epistle in Smith's *DB.* by Lightfoot, 1863; Hastings' *DB.* by Lock, 1902; Cheyne's *Enc. Bibl.* by McGiffert, 1903; Murray's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* by Sinker.

See also the article on "Paul" in Hastings' *DCG.* II. by Sanday, 1908.

Of German commentaries those by Schmiedel, 1892 (in Holtzmann), Börnemann, 1894 (in Meyer), Wohlenberg, 1903 (in Zahn), Dobschütz, 1909 (in Meyer), will be found most useful.

N.B.—In the quotations from the A.V., *italics* signify that the word is not expressed in the Greek. In the paraphrase, *italics* signify that the word is emphatic. Paraphrase is necessary, because no mere translation, however accurate, can convey the fulness of the Apostle's meaning to the English reader.

# A COMMENTARY ON ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

## i. 1. THE SALUTATION

1 Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the Church of the Thessalonians *which is* in God the Father and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Salutation in 1 Thessalonians is the shortest of all the Pauline Salutations,\* but it contains all that is essential, and it implies a great deal that is not expressed, as the following paraphrase shows.

‘Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, well known to you as friends and instructors, to the Assembly of Thessalonians who have God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord, and are thereby united as children in one family and members in one body. We send you the Christian and the Jewish greeting combined—grace, the source of all spiritual blessings, and peace, the end and issue of them all.’

1. Neither here nor in 2 Thess. i. 1 does St. Paul give himself or his colleagues any title, either ‘Apostle’ or ‘bondservant of Jesus Christ.’ The omission of ‘Apostle’ after ‘Paul,’ as in Phil. i. 1, is in harmony with the tone of the letter, which is one of affection rather than of authority. All three workers were on equally friendly terms with the Macedonian Churches. No titles are required, because all

\* The concluding Benediction is also short. The brevity of both is in harmony with the simplicity of style which characterizes these early Epistles, as compared with the later groups.

three were personally known. From ii. 6, where all three are called 'apostles' in the general sense of 'missionaries,' it is plain that while St. Paul was working at Thessalonica the claims of an Apostle had not been pressed, and in none of the Macedonian Churches had his authority as an Apostle been questioned. The omission of the title here is a mark of genuineness; a forger would probably have inserted it.

Silvanus in the Epistles (2 Thess. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 19; 1 Pet. v. 12) is the same person as Silas, who in Acts (xv. 22-xviii. 5) is mentioned thirteen times. Silas is possibly an abbreviation of Silvanus; but it is probably the Jewish name of which Silvanus is the Latin equivalent indicating Roman citizenship. The short for Silvanus would be Silvas. Zahn, *Intr. to the N.T.*, I. p. 31. Silvanus is placed before Timothy as being an older man and a labourer of longer service and greater distinction (Acts xv. 22, xvii. 14, 15, xviii. 5). At Thessalonica he would probably take a more prominent part than Timothy. He entirely sympathized with St. Paul's endeavours to convert the Gentiles; but there is probably more picturesqueness than truth in Origen's remark (quoted by Farrar) that the concurrence of Paul and Silas flashed out the lightning of these Epistles. Had Silvanus not rejoined the Apostle at Corinth, the Epistles would have flashed out in much the same manner.

Timothy is conspicuous in all the Pauline Epistles, excepting Galatians, Ephesians, and Titus. Cf. Acts xvi. 1; 1 Cor. xvi. 10; Phil. ii. 20, 22. It is probable that St. Paul himself converted him during his first journey in Asia Minor.

It is not likely that Silvanus and Timothy had much share in the actual composition of the letter; but their agreement with its contents is recognized throughout by the use of the 1st person plural down to v. 25. See on v. 2, ii. 4, 8, 18. We may conjecture that Timothy was the scribe to whom both 1 and 2 Thessalonians were dictated.

The combination of Silvanus and Timothy with the Apostle helps us to determine the date of the letter. The



Second Missionary Journey ended at Corinth, for after his long visit to that city St. Paul returned to Jerusalem ; and after this visit Silvanus appears no more as a companion of St. Paul (Acts xviii. 5 ; 2 Cor. i. 19).

to the assembly of Thessalonians] 'Assembly' rather than 'Church,' because *ecclesia* had as yet hardly acquired its specially Christian meaning.\* Both Jews and Greeks used *ecclesia* to denote their assemblies, and the Thessalonian converts would be familiar with the word. But the Christian use of the term was no doubt more closely connected with the Jewish than the Greek usage. See Trench, *Syn. of N.T.* § 1, Hort, *The Christian Ecclesia*, and Swete, *The Holy Catholic Church*. In Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, St. Paul addresses 'the saints,' not 'the assembly' or 'the Church.' And here he names the *people* rather than the city, Thessalonians rather than Thessalonica, while in Galatians we have the *country*, 'Churches of Galatia.' There is perhaps no reason for these variations.

We have no means of estimating the number of Christians in Thessalonica. From Acts xvii. 4 we infer that they were fairly numerous among the proselytes, but no account is taken there of the conversion of heathen after the mission to the synagogues had closed.

who have God as Father and Jesus Christ as Lord] Lit. 'in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' This momentous addition distinguishes the assembly which is addressed from the assemblies of Gentiles and of Jews with which the Thessalonians were familiar. Thus we at once have what is the most striking feature in these two early Epistles, viz. the equal emphasis on God the Father and on the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, as in 2 Thess. i. 1, the two are combined as the sphere in which the Church of the Thessalonians has its being ; cf. iii. 11 ; 2 Thess. ii. 16. Chrysostom calls attention to the preposition (ἐν) as being

\* Coverdale has 'congregacion' : so also Tyndale and Cranmer. Cf. Judith vi. 16 ; Eccclus. xxiv. 2, l. 13 ; 1 Macc. ii. 56.

common to both Father and Son : it is not repeated with the latter. This clause has been pointed out as " the first decisive step " towards Trinitarian doctrine. We may surmise that the use of ' Father ' of God was already current ; iii. 11, 13 ; 2 Thess. i. 1, ii. 16. The combination ' Lord Jesus Christ ' is specially frequent at the beginning of the Pauline Epistles. The expression had probably become current before St. Paul used it. The ineffable ' Jehovah ' in its Greek form has become the common appellation of Christ. In this short Epistle Christ is called ' the Lord ' more than twenty times. See Sanday in Hastings' *DB.* II. p. 648.

It is possible that St. Paul was the first to use the combination ' grace and peace.' It is adopted in 1 and 2 Peter, 2 John, and the Apocalypse ; and the fact that it is found in these very different writers is some evidence that it had become an ordinary Christian password. It is sometimes regarded as a combination of the Greek *χαίρειν* with the Hebrew *Shalom*, but both have their meaning deepened to an extent which makes the combination an original Christian creation. ' Peace ' must not be limited to a wish for deliverance from persecution. St. Paul has it in salutations to those who are not being persecuted. The favour of God naturally produces peace of mind. Enmity to God has ceased, and reconciliation has followed. The torturing anxiety about hostile deities has been for ever banished. ' Grace ' (*χάρις*) occurs far more often in the Pauline Epistles than in the rest of the N.T. In the O.T. it is rare in the Psalms and Prophets, but is frequent in the Sapiential Books. It has various shades of meaning : see Findlay on 2 Thess. i. 12 ; J. A. Robinson, *Ephesians*, pp. 221 f. ; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 10.

' From God our Father, etc.' must be omitted as an interpolation. In the later Epistles the words became a usual formula, and hence some scribes inserted them here. Cf. the insertion at the end of the Lord's Prayer in Mt. vi. 13.

## i. 2-iii. 13. HISTORICAL AND PERSONAL

The first main portion of the letter begins here. It consists of five sections ; i. 2-10, The Thanksgiving ; ii. 1-12, How the Three Missionaries acted at Thessalonica ; ii. 13-16, Renewed Thanksgiving for the Conversion of the Thessalonians and their Patience under Persecution ; ii. 17-iii. 10, The Writer's Anxiety until reassured by Timothy ; iii. 11-13, Prayer for the Thessalonians.

i. 2-10. THANKSGIVING FOR THE FRUITS OF THEIR  
CONVERSION

<sup>2</sup> We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers ; <sup>3</sup> Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father ; <sup>4</sup> Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. <sup>5</sup> For our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance ; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. <sup>6</sup> And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost : <sup>7</sup> So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. <sup>8</sup> For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad ; so that we need not to speak any thing. <sup>9</sup> For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ; <sup>10</sup> And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

This kind of opening is a usual feature in the Pauline Epistles, found in all of them, excepting Galatians and 1 Timothy and Titus. Pious expressions of gratitude were common in the secular letters of that age, but in the Apostle's letters they are no mere conventional openings. They strike a solemn note at the outset, in order at once to put the hearers of the letter into a receptive state of mind. He had strong views as to the duty of thanksgiving. ' Thanksgiving ' (εὐχαριστία) and ' to thank ' (εὐχαριστεῖν)

are far more frequent in his writings than in the rest of the N.T. Cf. ii. 13, v. 18; 2 Cor. i. 11, iv. 15, ix. 11, 12; Eph. v. 4, 20; Phil. iv. 6; Col. ii. 7, iii. 17, iv. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 1, iv. 3, 4. This Thanksgiving and that in Philipians are exceptionally full; they are addressed to Churches for which the Apostle had a very deep affection. Those in the supplementary 2 Thessalonians and in Romans are exceptionally brief. See Jowett, I. p. 45 on these verses as specially characteristic of St. Paul's style, the propositions overlaying one another, sometimes without clear relation to one another. The probable connexion is suggested in the following paraphrase.

'<sup>2</sup> We thank the one and only God on all occasions for all of you, making a mention of you at our times of prayer unceasingly, and this because of what we remember and what we know. <sup>3</sup> We remember how your faith has shown itself, not in word only, but in work, your love in ceaseless toil for others, and your hope in patient endurance of suffering, a hope inspired by the thought of the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the presence of our God and Father. <sup>4</sup> We thank God also, Brethren so dearly beloved by Him, because we know so well the reality of His favour in singling you out and making you His own, <sup>5</sup> a favour shown by the fact that our preaching of the Gospel did not come to you as a mere triumph of oratory, but was effective in power, inspired by the Holy Spirit and by our full conviction of its truth. In like manner ye know equally well what kind of people we proved ourselves to be among you for your sakes. <sup>6</sup> And you on your part showed the reality of His favour by proving yourselves imitators of us who are imitators of the Lord; for you welcomed the word when to do so involved great affliction, and you did so with a joy which was a gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>7</sup> So fully was this the case that you became a pattern to all the Christians in Macedonia and in Achaia. <sup>8</sup> Yes, a pattern, for it is from you as a centre that the word of God has sounded out and still sounds in Macedonia and Achaia; and not only so, but in every place the report of your faith towards God has gone forth to the world so fully that there is no need for us to talk at all about it. <sup>9</sup> For the inhabitants themselves of their own accord report respecting us what a prosperous admission we had into your midst, and with what readiness ye turned to the true God, leaving your dead idols in order to become bondservants of a God who is living and real, <sup>10</sup> and to await the Return of His Son out of heaven, the Son whom He raised from the dead, Jesus who is our Deliverer from the wrath of God which is now coming near to us.'



**2. We thank]** In 1 and 2 Thess., as in 2 Cor. i–ix., the 1st person plural prevails ; St. Paul includes Silvanus and Timothy with himself throughout. See on ii. 4, 8, and also Zahn, *Introd. to N.T.*, I. p. 210. Even in iii. 1, 2, Silvanus is included, and perhaps Timothy also as consenting to the arrangement. St. Paul does this in these two letters much more fully than he does in 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, in which Timothy is joined with the Apostle, or in 1 Corinthians, in which Sosthenes seems to be almost entirely forgotten after the opening words. In 1 Corinthians, Philippians, and Philemon he at once begins with the 1st person singular, ‘*I thank.*’ ‘*Thank on all occasions*’ (εὐχαρ. πάντοτε) occurs 2 Thess. i. 3 ; 1 Cor. i. 4 ; Phil. i. 3, 4 ; and in Eph. v. 20 we have the full phrase (εὐχαρ. πάντοτε περὶ πάντων), as here. St. Paul is fond of alliteration, especially with the letter π ; See on iv. 17 and on 2 Cor. ix. 8.

**the one and only God]** ‘*The God*’ (τῷ Θεῷ), in contrast to the many false Gods which the heathen Thessalonians had previously worshipped.

**for all of you]** The ‘*all*’ is emphatic ; even for those who are most faulty ; cf. v. 5, 27 ; 2 Thess. i. 3, iii. 16, 18 ; Eph. vi. 18.

**making mention of]** The expression occurs Rom. i. 9 ; Eph. i. 16 ; Philem. 4 ; always in connexion with prayer. The same use is found in papyri. We gather from this that the three missionaries were accustomed to unite together in prayer and intercession,—doubtless one of the causes of the success of their labours.

**at our times of prayer]** Rather than ‘*in our prayers.*’ Not ἐν, as in Col. iv. 12, but ἐπὶ, as in Rom. i. 9 ; Eph. i. 16 ; Philem. 4 ; and not the singular, of the public prayer of the Church to which he is writing, as in Rom. xii. 12 ; 1 Cor. vii. 5 ; Phil. iv. 6 ; Col. iv. 2, but the plural, of private intercession, as in Rom. i. 9 ; etc. See E. A. Abbott, *The Founding of the New Kingdom*, p. 58.

**unceasingly]** Cf. ii. 13, v. 17 ; Rom. i. 9 ; 1 Macc. xii. 11 ; 2 Macc. iii. 26. Both the adv. (ἀδιαλείπτως) and the adj.

are peculiar to St. Paul in the N.T., and always in connexion with prayer or thanksgiving. Here the adv. may be taken with either 'making mention' or 'remember.'

3. Note the triplet, 'how your *faith* works, and your *love* toils, and your *hope* endures.' This is the earliest occurrence of the triplet. We have it again, in the same order, v. 8 and Col. i. 4; and, in a different order, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Hope is more emphasized in 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Love in 1 Corinthians. The combination of works, toil, and endurance occurs Rev. ii. 2; and the words in this order form a climax. Endurance (*ὑπομονή*), as Chrysostom says, is the 'Queen of Virtues.' It means manly endurance without cowardly shrinking. See Trench, *Syn.* § liii., Ropes on Jas. i. 3, and Plummer on 2 Cor. i. 6. The 'toil' (*κόπος*) is not to be restricted to manual labour; it includes charitable toil of all kinds, and it implies more energy, persistence, and fatigue than mere 'work' (*ἔργον*). St. Paul toiled with hands, heart, and brain. See on v. 12.

Note also the accumulation of genitives, which is rather common in the Pauline Epistles; Rom. viii. 21; 2 Cor. iv. 4; Eph. i. 6, iv. 13; Col. i. 13. A T. Robertson, *Gr. of Grk. N.T.*, p. 503.

**your hope in patient endurance of suffering]** Endurance under persecution is strengthened by hope. Christian love 'hopeth all things, endureth all things' (1 Cor. xiii. 7). St. Paul in his earlier letters is already impressed with the necessary connexion, in such a world, between Christian life and persecution; iii. 3, 7; 2 Thess. i. 4, 6; 2 Cor. i. 4, iv. 17, vii. 4, viii. 2; Rom. v. 3, viii. 35, xii. 12.

**hope . . . of the Coming]** This was strong throughout Christendom in the Apostolic age, and it was specially strong at Thessalonica. Christians anxiously expected it.

**in the presence of our God and Father]** This is a guarantee that their estimate of the Thessalonians is not the result of prejudice and partiality; cf. ii. 19, iii. 9, 13. We may connect the words with either 'remember,' or 'work, toil, and endurance,' or with 'endurance' alone. 'Our God and Father' occurs Gal. i. 4 and Phil. iv. 20. In all three places

the 'our' almost certainly belongs to both 'God' and 'Father.' See on 2 Cor. i. 3, where we have a similar construction.

4. **Brethren so dearly beloved by Him]** The affectionate address, 'Brethren,' is remarkably frequent in this letter (ii. 1, 9, 14, 17, iii. 7, etc.), but the addition 'beloved by God' is unique in the N.T. Cf. Eccus. xlv. 1. In 2 Thess. ii. 13 we have 'Brethren beloved by the Lord,' *i.e.* by Jesus Christ. The two expressions seem to be treated as equivalent. 'By God' certainly belongs to 'beloved' (R.V.), not to 'election' (A.V.). Election is always the result of His love.

**because we know]** This looks back to 'we thank' in *v.* 2. It is surprising that Theodoret, Erasmus, and others should make the participle (εἰδότες) refer to the Thessalonians, 'for ye know.'

**favour in singling you out]** This is the full meaning of 'election' (ἐκλογή); God had *appropriated* them out of many. Cf. 'the Chosen People.' The word does not occur in the LXX. In the N.T. it is always used of choice made by God; Acts ix. 15; Rom. ix. 11, xi. 5, 7, 28; 2 Pet. i. 10. Cf. 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. The Thessalonians had evidently been taught that before they were born the advantages of the Gospel were in store for them; 2 Thess. ii. 13. But here there is no rigid scheme of Predestination. See Light-foot on Col. iii. 12. "It does not seem possible to determine on N.T. evidence whether the individuals are regarded as owing their membership in the Church to their election, or as becoming elect by virtue of their membership" (Hastings' *DB.* art. 'Election,' p. 679b). How the reality of this favour is known St. Paul goes on to state.

5. **shown by the fact that]** The three missionaries felt that in preaching to the Thessalonians they had had Divine assistance. Men's words unaided would never have had such effect. This is the experience of many a successful worker. The οὔτι = 'for' (A.V.) rather than 'how that' (R.V.); it explains how the missionaries know the election of the Thessalonians. They have two pieces of evidence, first

the power of their own preaching, and secondly the change in the Thessalonians' manner of life.

**the Gospel]** Or 'Glad-tidings,' or 'Good-news,' entrusted by God to the Apostles to proclaim to the world. A written Gospel is not meant, even if one existed. It is possible that St. Paul had seen 'Q,' the lost document used by Mt. and Lk. Almost certainly Mk. was not yet written. See Introduction V. In any case it is not a written document which is spoken of here, but the Gospel message.

**in power]** Cf. 1 Cor. ii. 4, where a similar claim is made. The expression (*δυνάμει*) does not imply miracles, but power to influence men's hearts; and words alone, however eloquent, cannot do this. We have the same preposition (*ἐν*) in all four places, but the meaning of it varies; hence the different renderings. In Acts iv. 29 'the word' is contrasted with miracles.

**our full conviction]** Cf. Rom. iv. 21, xiv. 5; Col. ii. 2; Heb. vi. 11, x. 22. This conviction or assurance (*πληροφορία*) means the confidence of the three missionaries in the truth and efficacy of their message. They had no paralysing doubts. But the knowledge is not all on their side. As they know the effect of the Gospel on the Thessalonians, so the Thessalonians know what kind of preachers the men who thus affected them proved to be. We might render 'we were enabled (by God) to be,' giving *ἐγενήθημεν* a passive sense. The sincerity of these teachers was transparent.

The Thessalonians' knowledge exactly corresponds with the facts of the case (*καθὼς οἶδατε*). More often than in any other letter the Apostle appeals to what his converts *know*; ii. 1, 2, 5, 11, iii. 3, 4, iv. 2, v. 2. It is evident that some of the hostile Jews had been defaming him; his answer is, 'You *know* us and our conduct.' The whole of this half of the letter (i. 2-iii. 13), while aiming at consoling and strengthening the converts, is largely, if not mainly, a defence of the conduct of those who converted them.

**6. And you on your part]** The pronoun is emphatic, in contrast to 'our' in the previous verse; there is something more



personal to be said of the converts. They 'proved to be' (ἐγενήθητε) copiers of their teachers and therefore of Christ who is their teachers' model ; 1 Cor. iv. 16, xi. 1 ; Phil. iii. 17. This is the second part of the proof that they have been specially chosen by God. The first was the inspired nature of the Gospel ; the second is the hearty nature of their reception of it. Cf. Jas. i. 21.

The nicety and tactfulness with which St. Paul dispenses praise where he sees it to be due is remarkable. " He knows that there are no more powerful levers in education than praise administered rarely but with discrimination and entire trust " (Weinel, *St. Paul, the Man and his Work*, p. 365). Cf. ii. 13, 19, 20, iii. 6, iv. 1, 9, 10.

**imitators of us]** Cf. ii. 14. The Apostle was conscious of his intense union with Christ, especially as regards joy in suffering. He had been crucified with Christ ; Gal. ii. 20. Therefore he could venture to call on his converts to imitate him ; for in so doing they imitated Christ.

**imitators of the Lord]** ' The Lord ' is used constantly by St. Paul as a proper name for Jesus Christ, and it sums up His Divine attributes ; v. 8, iii. 8, 12, iv. 6, 15, 16, 17, v. 2, 12, etc. To Him faith, obedience, and worship are due. The use is not of St. Paul's making. It springs naturally from Christ's own Saying, Mk. xii. 35 and parallels.

**for you welcomed the word]** Although becoming a Christian involved bitter persecution (ii. 14, iii. 2-4 ; Acts xvii. 1-13), they had not merely listened to the Gospel, but had embraced it with a joy which could have only one source, viz., the Holy Spirit ; Rom. xiv. 17. Cf. ii. 13 ; 2 Thess. i. 4-7. From the very first, joy accompanied the proclamation of the Glad-tidings ; Lk. ii. 10 ; Acts viii. 8, 39, xiii. 48 ; Phil. i. 25 ; Col. i. 11. The mingling of joy with affliction is also common, especially with the affliction of persecution ; Mt. v. 11, 12 ; Lk. vi. 22 ; Acts v. 41 ; xiii. 52 ; Rom. v. 3 ; 2 Cor. vi. 10, vii. 4, viii. 2 ; etc. And joy is elsewhere spoken of as a gift of the Spirit ; Rom. xiv. 17, xv. 13 ; Gal. v. 22. The cheeriness of our troops and of those of our Allies, in the midst of prolonged privations and ceaseless

danger of mutilation and death, is a fine illustration of affliction mingled with joy.

**7. You became a pattern]** This was true of the Thessalonian Church as a whole, although the members of it were still far from perfection and some were very unsatisfactory ; iv. 1-12, v. 12-15. These verses seem somewhat extravagant when one remembers how few Churches had been founded in Europe, and how small each of them was. But the Apostle thinks of the scope of his calling.

The reading ' patterns ' (τύπους for τύπον) is an obvious correction to agree with the plural ' you ' (ὁμᾶς).

**in Macedonia and in Achaia]** The Thessalonians were in Macedonia, the writers in Achaia. The repetition of the preposition marks the two Roman provinces as distinct ; in v. 8 they are treated as a whole, meaning Greece, which was thus divided B.C. 142.\* The statement in vv. 7 and 8 implies that St. Paul had worked in Achaia for a few months ; otherwise there could not be many converts there to imitate the Thessalonians. A still longer period must be allowed between the missionaries' departure from Thessalonica and the writing of this letter from Corinth, for they remained some time in Macedonia after leaving Thessalonica.

**8. from you]** First with emphasis ; cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 36. It was not through the missionaries' efforts that these excellent results followed.

**has sounded out and still sounds]** The full force of the Greek perfect (ἐξήχηται). ' Has *been* sounded out ' might be more accurate. The verb occurs Joel iii. 14 and 3 Macc. iii. 2, but nowhere else in N.T. ; and it is immaterial whether St. Paul is thinking of thunder (Ecclus. xl. 13) or a trumpet (Rev. i. 10). Here and in similar passages (iv. 15 ; 2 Thess. iii. 1 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 36 ; 2 Cor. ii. 17, iv. 2 ; Col. i. 25, iii. 16 ; Tit. ii. 9) ' the word of the Lord,' or ' of Christ,' or ' of God,' means the word which proceeds from Him, as in the Prophets ; Jer. i. 2, 4, ii. 1, xiv. 1 ; Ezek. i. 3, iii. 16 ; etc.

\* Cf. Jn. xi. 19 πρὸς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ Μαριάμ, where Martha and Mary are regarded as one household. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, p. 68.

**in every place]** Conventional hyperbole ; cf. Rom. i. 8, xvi. 19 ; 1 Cor. i. 2 ; 2 Cor. ii. 14 ; 1 Tim. ii. 8. The Apostle writes out of the fulness of a grateful heart, and he is generous in his praise. Thessalonica was a commercial centre on the Via Egnatia with a sea-port, and news would spread quickly from it. Travellers may have brought news to Corinth. But we must allow time for this ; see on ii. 18.

**has gone forth to the world]** " Note," says Chrysostom, " how he speaks of it as a living thing." The compound verb (*ἐξελήλυθεν*) is used in the same sense Rom. x. 18 and 1 Cor. xiv. 36. The perfect tense again includes present results.

**there is no need]** Cf. iv. 9, v. 1 ; Mt. iii. 14, xiv. 16 ; Heb. v. 12.

**9. the inhabitants themselves]** Those in Macedonia and Achaia. There was no need to ask for information. See the first note on iv. 16.

**report]** Pres. tense ; reports continually reach Corinth.  
**how]** ' How thoroughly and enthusiastically.'

**ye turned to the true God]** We again have *τὸν Θεόν*, as in v. 2. ' To turn to Jehovah ' (*ἐπιστρέφειν πρὸς Κύριον*) and ' to be bondservants of Jehovah ' (*δουλεύειν Κυρίῳ*) are frequent in the LXX. For heathen this was an entire break with their past life, and it is difficult for those who have had no experience of it to estimate the magnitude of the change. Harnack says of these two verses (9, 10), " Here we have the mission-preaching to pagans in a nutshell " (*Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, I. p. 89). Cf. 1 Cor. xii. 2. Jacquier conjectures that the Jewish converts " may have renounced communion when the troubles caused by their fellow countrymen arose " (*Hist. of the Books of the N.T.*, p. 68). The statement implies that the majority of the converts were originally heathen, which might also be inferred from ii. 14 ; and we have here some evidence that St. Paul must have spent some months at Thessalonica. Three weeks were spent in preaching to the Jews ; Acts xvii. 2. After that the work would be chiefly among Gentiles who did not frequent the synagogues, and this

would take time. See on ii. 9. For 'turn' in this sense cf. 2 Cor. iii. 16.

to become bondservants] Cf. Rom. xiv. 18, xvi. 18; Col. iii. 24. St. Paul is a 'bondservant of Christ'; Rom i. 1; Gal. i. 10; Phil. i. 10; and of God; Tit. i. 1.

- a God who is living and real] Who can act, and who corresponds to the idea of God (ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ), whereas idols can do nothing and are nonentities; 1 Cor. viii. 4, x. 19; Acts xiv. 15; Lev. xix. 4; Jer. xiv. 14. See *Enc. Bibl.* II. 2148. The 'living God' is one who 'has life in Himself' and 'gave to the Son also to have life in Himself'; Jn. v. 26; Rom. iv. 17, 24; Josh. iii. 10; Dan. vi. 26; Is. lxv. 16, which St. Paul may have in his mind. The 'true God' does not mean 'who cannot lie'; Tit. i. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 13; Heb. vi. 18. It means One who is 'very God,' and can forgive sin and free men from it. Trench, *Syn.* § viii.

10. to await the Return of His Son] This is the great 'hope' which dominates these two Epistles. At the time when they were written, the three writers and those to whom they wrote expected that the Lord would come soon: therefore all Christians must make themselves fit to meet Him. Every chapter in this Epistle closes with this subject; ii. 19, 20, iii. 13, iv. 17, 18, v. 23, 24. In 1 Cor. it is still conspicuous; in the later Epistles it is less so: but we find it in Phil. iv. 5. St. Luke gives us no hint in Acts that the subject of the Return occupied so prominent a place in the early preaching of St. Paul.\* But it was certainly prominent in the later teaching of Christ, and His Apostle found it useful at Thessalonica. See A. T. Robertson, *Epochs in the Life of St. Paul*, p. 168. 'Await' is a compound verb (ἀναμένειν), implying constant and patient waiting.

\* We do, however, find it in St. Paul's speech on the Areopagus (Acts xvii. 31), which was delivered shortly before this Epistle was written at Corinth; and it is the only Christian doctrine which appears in the speech. See Lightfoot, art. on 'Acts of the Apostles' in ed. 2 of Smith's *DB.*, p. 35.



Only here in these two letters is Christ spoken of as the Son of God ; but the expression is frequent in the four great Epistles. The 'devout' (σεβόμενοι) heathen, who formed the large majority of the first converts at Thessalonica (Acts xvii. 4), had turned to the living and true God before they heard the Gospel. It was the Gospel that told them of the Son of God.

**out of heaven]** Lit. 'out of the heavens,' as in 'the Kingdom of heaven' in Mt. St. Paul often has the plural ; but it is by no means certain that, as in 2 Cor. xii. 2, he is thinking of a series of heavens, one above the other. In iv. 16 ; 2 Thess. i. 7 ; Rom. i. 18, x. 6 ; 1 Cor. xv. 47 ; 2 Cor. v. 2 he has the singular. The Hebrew equivalent has no singular, a fact which may be due to the belief in a series of heavens which was common among the Jews. In 2 Cor. v. 1, 2 we have the plural and the singular in consecutive verses, without difference of meaning.

**whom He raised from the dead]** The point of this addition is that therefore we shall be raised from the dead to be judged by Him. The parallel between these two verses (9, 10) and the conclusion of the Apostle's address at Athens (Acts xvii. 31) is remarkable. This was a leading topic in teaching heathen. Cf. ii. 19, iii. 13.

**Jesus who is our Deliverer]** It is clear from this verse that, for St. Paul, the Jesus who died and was raised is one and the same with the glorified Christ who is coming to judge and to rescue. 'Deliverer' perhaps refers to the name Jesus, 'the Saviour.' See Sanday and Headlam on Rom. xi. 26. The participle (τὸν ῥυόμενον) is timeless ; 'which delivereth' (R.V.) is not quite right, still less, 'which delivered' (A.V.). It is the *character* of the Saviour that is expressed by it ; He is our Redeemer. Cf. Wisd. xvi. 8.

**from the wrath]** Lit. 'out of the wrath,' out of the reach of it, so that the deliverance is complete. We have ἐκ, not, as in 2 Thess. iii. 2 and in the Lord's Prayer, ἀπό. This shows, as Sabatier remarks, that the Apostle of the Gentiles, like the other Apostles, began by preaching the imminence of the Divine Judgment, and, like the Baptist, spoke of 'the

wrath to come.' See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, p. 405, and cf. Eccles. vii. 16, xxiii. 16.

'The wrath' means God's anger, as in ii. 16; Rom. iii. 5, v. 9, ix. 22, xiii. 5; Is. xiii. 9; Eccles. v. 7. Not that He is an angry God rather than a merciful one; still less that He exhibits arbitrary outbursts of rage, as men do. But, seeing that sin exists, there must be Divine repulsion and displeasure. The N.T. supplies no definition of this wrath, but the effect of it is spoken of as 'death,' 'destruction,' 'perdition' (*θάνατος, ὀλεθρος, ἀπώλεια*). See Hastings' *DAC*. art. 'Anger.'

**which is now coming near to us]** It is on its way, it is always impending. 'To come' (A.V., R.V.) rather implies that it is remote in the distant future, which is not the Apostle's meaning. Cf. Eph. v. 6; Col. iii. 6.\* In Mt. iii. 7 = Lk. iii. 7 we have *ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης*.

This Thanksgiving tells us of two leading ideas in the preaching of the missionaries. There is only one God, who has love for the righteous and wrath for the ungodly; and a Judgment is coming, in which the love and the wrath will find expression, and in which God's Son can save us from the wrath. In iv. 16-18 there is no mention of the Judgment; and here, as in v. 9, it is implied rather than stated. The Thanksgiving is resumed ii. 13, and there, as here, it ends with a mention of the wrath of God.

## ii. 1-12. HOW THE THREE MISSIONARIES ACTED AT THESSALONICA

ii. <sup>1</sup> For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain: <sup>2</sup> But even after that we had suffered

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\* The thought that the great catastrophe is near is frequent in eschatological writings; 'It will surely come, it will not tarry' (Hab. ii. 3); 'Things which must shortly come to pass' (Rev. i. 1, xxii. 6, 20); 'The Judge will come and will not tarry' (Apocalypse of Baruch, xlviii. 39, cf. xx. 6). To the idea of the sure fulfilment of the Divine purpose "the keen hope of primitive Christianity adds *ἐν τάχει*" (Swete on Rev. i. 1). The Apostle's attitude, as that of Christ Himself during His ministry on earth, is that 'God

before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention. <sup>3</sup> For our exhortation *was* not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile : <sup>4</sup> But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak ; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. <sup>5</sup> For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness ; God *is* witness : <sup>6</sup> Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor *yet* of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. <sup>8</sup> So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. <sup>9</sup> For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail : for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> Ye *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. <sup>11</sup> As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, (as a father *doth* his children,) <sup>12</sup> That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

St. Paul enlarges on the subject just touched upon in i. 5, viz. the conduct of himself and his fellow-workers in converting the Thessalonians ; and the result is a personal narrative similar to that in Gal. i. 11–iii. 14 and to a great deal of 2 Corinthians. The section gives us a vivid idea of the frame of mind in which this letter was dictated. The intensity of feeling and of effort with which the missionaries laboured among the Thessalonians during those eventful months is fresh in the Apostle's memory. He reminds them of the preachers' courage in the face of persecution (1, 2), of their freedom from self-interest (3–6), and of their parental tenderness in instructing them. We may safely conjecture that there had been criticism of the missionaries' behaviour, and that this is a reply to it. Jews had probably been saying that Paul was a fanatical renegade, who wrapped up his novel doctrines in specious language, in order to conceal

alone knows the consummation of the times before they come' (Apoc. of Bar. xxi. 8). See Hastings' *DB.* art. 'Eschatology,' pp. 755 f.

his vanity and greed, like the itinerant impostors who preached new cults. Just as we owe Newman's inimitable *Apologia* to Kingsley's attack on him, so we owe the precious descriptions of the Apostle's work as a missionary and educator to the attacks which were made upon him at Thessalonica and Corinth. But we may allow for the *possibility* that the Apostle, in his abnormal sensitiveness, had somewhat exaggerated estimates of the malignity of his opponents. What is certain is that the Jews had stirred up the heathen to expel the missionaries and persecute their converts.

<sup>1</sup> You at any rate do not need to be told of what other people have reported about our work and its results, for you yourselves know, Brethren, with regard to our admission into your midst, that it has proved to be by no means ineffective. <sup>2</sup> On the contrary, although we had had a foretaste of what we might expect at Thessalonica in the sufferings and brutal outrages to which, as you fully know, we were subjected at Philippi, we took courage—a courage which was not our own but our God's—to declare unto you the Gospel of God in the face of much violent opposition. <sup>3</sup> I say that our courage was God's, and that the Gospel which we preached to you was God's; and this is no exaggeration. For the appeal which we make to you is not the result of our being delivered, nor yet of our having sensual motives, nor again is it made with a schemer's guile. <sup>4</sup> On the contrary, exactly to the degree that we have been judged by God to be fit to be put in trust with the Gospel, so in accordance with this approval we declare it, not as though we aimed at pleasing men, but pleasing God, who judges our hearts and motives. <sup>5</sup> And this also is no exaggeration. For neither did we at any time engage in language such as flatterers use, as you fully know, nor any false professions such as greedy schemers use,—God is our witness; <sup>6</sup> nor did we seek to get glory out of men, either from you or from others, although we might have been overbearing in our character of apostles, and apostles of Christ. <sup>7</sup> On the contrary, we showed ourselves simple as children, mixing with you as one of yourselves, much as a nursing mother does when she fondles her own children: <sup>8</sup> yes, with all a mother's yearning over you we were delighted to impart to you, not only the Gospel of God, but even our own lives, because ye had become as beloved children in our eyes. <sup>9</sup> Again there is no exaggeration. For you can call to mind, Brethren, how we worked for our living and struggled hard. Labouring night and day to avoid being burdensome to any of you we preached to you the Gospel of God. <sup>10</sup> As was said before,



ye are witnesses, and God also, how religiously and righteously, and in a manner that was free from all reproach, we behaved ourselves towards you who believe. <sup>11</sup> Indeed, as you very well know, to each one of you we acted as a father to his own children, <sup>12</sup> exhorting you and encouraging you and protesting to you solemnly, that in your daily life you should walk worthily of the God who is the Inviter that called you into His own Kingdom and glory.'

**1. for you yourselves know]** The pronoun is very emphatic ; see on iv. 16. 'I can speak quite positively, and I need not say much, for I can appeal to your own experience.' See on i. 5.\* The frequent 'ye know' (*οἴδατε*) is no evidence that the Thessalonians had written to St. Paul. If they had, they would not have told him of his sufferings at Philippi.

**Brethren]** See on i. 4 ; also the full note of Ropes on Jas. i. 2. Seeing that the Jews used 'brother' in the sense of 'fellow-countrymen' (Exod. ii. 11 ; Deut. xv. 3, xvii. 15, xix. 18, 19, etc.) it came to be used of fellow-members of the new Israel. Among Gentile Christians this usage was facilitated by the fact that among the heathen 'brother' sometimes meant a fellow-member of some religious society. Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, p. 87.

**our admission]** This refers to i. 9, where the same word (*εἰσόδος*) is used.

**it has proved to be]** Its character is established and remains (*γέγονεν*). The 'was' of the A.V. is inadequate.

**ineffective]** Hollow and empty, devoid of power (*κενή*) ; xv. 10, 14, 58. As Chrysostom says, *οὐκ ἀνθρωπίνῃ, οὐδὲ ἡ τυχοῦσα* : it was not an ordinary one, but had very special features. 'Empty-handed' is not the meaning.

**2. sufferings and brutal outrages]** At Philippi they had been treated with wanton indignity ; cf. Mt. xxii. 6 ; Lk. xviii. 32. Trench, *Syn.* § xxix. It was outrageous to strip, beat, and imprison Roman citizens without a hearing ;

\* 'For' (*γάρ*) is exceedingly frequent as a connecting particle between St. Paul's sentences, and it is important to see in each case what it implies. In the paraphrase it is almost always expanded : i. 8, 9, ii. 3, 5, 9, 14, 19, etc.

Acts xvi. 22, 37. At Thessalonica they might have been treated in a similar way ; but that did not deter them from delivering their message persistently and with courage. Cf. Acts ix. 27 ; Eph. vi. 20.

**as ye fully know]** The Thessalonians had seen Paul and Silas soon after the beating at Philippi. See on i. 5.

**a courage not our own but our God's]** They are not boasting of their own bravery ; it is rooted in their God, who is now the Thessalonians' God. There may here be a contrast with the impotent idols. ' Our God ' occurs again iii. 9 ; 2 Thess. i. 11, 12 ; 1 Cor. vi. 11 ; and it is frequent in Revelation. ' My God ' is more common in the Pauline Epistles ; but usually there is no possessive pronoun.

**the Gospel of God]** The Good-tidings which He sends.

**violent opposition]** Such as is seen in the arena (*ἀγῶνι*). The metaphor is an obvious one in describing the life of a Christian, especially in the midst of heathen ; 1 Cor. ix. 25 ; xv. 32 ; Eph. vi. 12 ; 2 Tim. ii. 5, iv. 7 ; Heb. x. 32 ; Jude 3. ' Anxiety ' is a less probable meaning ; but the word may be used of internal as well as of external conflict ; Phil. i. 30 ; Col. ii. 1.

3. **the appeal]** This means an appeal to the feelings (*παράκλησις*), in the form either of ' consolation ' for the past or present, as often in 2 Cor., or of ' exhortation ' for the present or future. ' Instruction ' (*διδασκαλία*, *διδασκαλία*) is an appeal to the intellect. See Hastings' *DAC*. art. ' Exhortation.'

In what follows we may regard it as certain that the writers are replying to charges and insinuations which their Jewish opponents had made against them.\* The motives of the Jews were commonly jealousy of the Apostles' miraculous power and success, and disgust that Jewish privileges were being thrown open to the Gentiles (Acts v. 17, xvii. 5, xxii. 21, 22) ; and their usual weapons were insinuation and slander. But they often resorted to violence.

**the result of our being deluded]** The expression (*ἐκ πλάνης*) implies serious aberration, being led utterly astray ;

\* See Chase, *Credibility of the Acts* (Hulsean Lectures, 1900), p. 246.

2 Thess. ii. 11. See J. A. Robinson on Eph. iv. 14. The three missionaries were not victims of a vast deception.

**of our having sensual motives]** It seems to us strange that the Apostle should think it necessary to disclaim sensuality (*ἀκαθαρσία*). But heathen worship was so often combined with wild emotionalism akin to impurity (as in that of the Cabiri at Thessalonica) that it might seem to be expedient to point out that the Gospel was not made attractive by any such methods. Moreover the Jews accused the Apostle of undermining the moral law by his teaching. We must abide by the true meaning of *ἀκαθαρσία*. The word cannot mean 'covetousness.'

**with a schemer's guile]** This charge against the Apostle was afterwards made at Corinth; 2 Cor. xii. 16. With the change of prepositions here (*ἐκ* to *ἐν*) compare that in iv. 7 (*ἐπί* to *ἐν*).

4. **exactly to the degree]** Cf. 2 Cor. x. 7, where, as here, we have *καθὼς . . . οὕτως*. See on v. 2.

**judged by God to be fit]** Just as Athenians were tested as to antecedents and character before they were allowed to assume office, so God had tested them (*δεδοκιμάσμεθα*) before giving them a commission to preach. The result of the testing remains. See on i. 8.

**to be put in trust with the Gospel]** With *πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον* cf. *οἰκονομίαν πεπίστευμαι* (1 Cor. ix. 17); also Gal. ii. 7; 1 Tim. i. 11.

**who judges our hearts]** From Jer. xi. 20, xii. 3. The expression is frequent in the Psalms. Although there are no direct quotations from the O.T., most of the converts being ignorant of it, there are several places in which the Apostle, consciously or unconsciously, reproduces its language; ii. 16, iv. 5, 6, 8, v. 8, 22. For the plural 'hearts' see on v. 8 and on i. 2. The 'our' refers to the three writers of the Epistle, as in 'our' appeal (v. 3). In Scripture 'the heart' covers the whole moral and spiritual character, the will and the intellect as well as the emotions; Rom. viii. 27; Rev. ii. 23. In sense, though not in wording, this is very similar to 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4; cf. also Gal. i. 10.

5. engage in any language such as flatterers use] They never resorted to cajoling (*κολακεία*) in order to get their way with the Thessalonians. The word is found nowhere else in the N.T.

false professions such as greedy schemers use] The 'greed' or self-seeking' (*πλεονεξία*) means getting more than one's fair share, being covetous and grasping (Trench, *Syn.* § 24); and the 'false profession' or 'pretext' (*πρόφασις*) is a pretended disinterestedness, a hypocritical air of unselfishness. Cf. Phil. i. 18; Acts xxvii. 30.

In vv. 5 and 6 there are three denials, as in v. 3; but the two triplets are similar in only one of the three points; 'false professions' may correspond to 'in guile.'

God is witness] What kind of language they had used the Thessalonians themselves knew: what their motives had been God alone knew. Cf. Rom. i. 9; Phil. i. 8; 2 Cor. i. 23; Gen. xxxi. 44; etc. "In that which was open to men's observation he appealed to their own testimony; but in regard to what was hidden, to whom could he appeal but to God?" (Aug. *Ep.* cxxvi. 10).

6. glory out of men] They were greedy neither of gain nor of praise. In their preaching they were not influenced by the desire of either of the two baits by which most men are caught.

overbearing] This refers mainly to the desire for glory. They might have stood upon their dignity and given themselves airs as 'men of weight.' But the expression (*ἐν βάρει εἶναι*) will cover the idea of greed also. Coverdale has 'chargeable'; they might have claimed maintenance and pay; 1 Cor. ix. 14, 15; 2 Cor. xi. 7-9. But this cannot be counted as a reminiscence of our Lord's instructions to the Seventy, Lk. x. 7. Rather, it marks imitation of the Lord Himself; He was a carpenter, and His great Apostle was a tent-maker.

apostles of Christ] 'Apostles' here is not used in its full official sense, but rather in its etymological meaning of those who are sent on an expedition or with a commission,— 'missionaries'; Rom. xvi. 7; 2 Cor. xi. 13; Acts xiv. 4,



14. Jews had 'apostles' who were sent from Jerusalem to scattered synagogues. See *DAC.* art. 'Apostle'; Zahn, *Introd. to the N.T.* I. p. 103. 'Of Christ' is emphatic by position; hence the repetition in the paraphrase.

7. The three positive statements refer here to the three denials in *vv.* 5 and 6. The unselfish character of the work would appeal to those who were so accustomed to the selfish greed of a trading centre.

simple as children . . . much as a nursing mother] 'Children, like a mother' looks incongruous, but is beautifully correct. A mother fondling her children comes down to their level, uses their language, and plays their games. The Apostle compares himself to a mother; Gal. iv. 19.

fondles.] Cf. Eph. v. 29, where the same verb (*θάλπειν*) is used. In Deut. xxii. 6 it is used of the hen bird sitting over its young in the nest. Hence Bengel says here on *ἐν μέσῳ ὑμῶν*, *sicut gallina pullis circumdata*. Cf. Lk. xxii. 27.

There seems to be no sufficient reason for adopting the less strongly attested reading 'tender-hearted' for 'simple as children' (*ἡπιοι* for *νήπιοι* as in Eph. iv. 15). W.H., II. p. 128.

8. with all a mother's yearning] The word (*ὀμειρόμενοι*) is extremely rare in Greek literature, and its origin is obscure. Vulg. has *desiderantes* here and iii. 6, where the much more common *ἐπιποθοῦντες* occurs.

we were delighted] 'well pleased' is hardly strong enough. Cf. iii. 1; 2 Thess. ii. 12; 2 Cor. v. 8, xii. 10, where the same verb (*εὐδοκεῖν*) occurs. Vulg. renders it in ten different ways; here *cupide volebamus*. It implies hearty good-will, absolute contentment. It was their duty to impart the Gospel; their own lives were an addition, and it was made with the utmost willingness.

even our own lives] 'Our own lives for our own children.' Cf. Acts xv. 26; Rom. xvi. 4. The plural here ('lives' not 'life,' as in *v.* 4 'hearts' not 'heart') shows that the plural verbs throughout the letter refer to the three missionaries, not to the Apostle alone. See on i. 2 and ii. 18.

as beloved children] Or, 'so very dear' (*ἀγαπητοί*).

This letter is exceptionally affectionate in tone. Considering its brevity, it has the address 'Brethren' (ἀδελφοί) more frequently than any other Epistle of St. Paul ; see on i. 4. *Le mobile de son zèle était un amour des âmes en quelque sorte infini* (Renan, *Saint Paul*, p. 237). Cf. 1 Cor. iv. 14 ; Eph. v. 1.

9. you can call to mind] Again they appeal to what the Thessalonians know from their own experience. See on i. 5.

how we worked and struggled] The same combination (κόπος and μόχθος) occurs 2 Thess. iii. 8 ; 2 Cor. xi. 27. It is unnecessary refinement to distinguish between the two words. The combination is a set phrase, like 'toil and travail,' 'toil and trouble,' in English. In the LXX the usual combination is κόπος καὶ πόνος, singular or plural ; Ps. xc. 10 ; Hab. i. 3 ; Jer. xx. 18, where some texts have κόπους καὶ μόχθους. So far from making claims on the Thessalonians, the missionaries toiled and moiled to support themselves. The precise nature of St. Paul's handicraft is a little uncertain ; whether he wove material for tent-making, or only cut it out and sewed it together ; also whether the material was cloth (*cilicium*) or leather. Cf. Acts xviii. 3, xx. 34 ; 2 Thess. iii. 8 ; 1 Cor. iv. 12, ix. 15. We do not know how Silvanus and Timothy earned their living. The Church at Thessalonica probably consisted chiefly of poor people who had to work for their daily bread.

The impression which these verses make on us is that the missionaries' stay in Thessalonica was of considerable length. Otherwise there would hardly be much necessity for this incessant work in addition to preaching ; still less for supplies being sent more than once from Philippi (see below). In Acts xvii. St. Luke tells only of the work in the synagogues among Jews and devout heathen who attended the synagogue-worship, who evidently formed only a minority of the total number of converts. There is no trace of them in these two Epistles.

night and day] This is St. Paul's usual order ; iii. 10 ; 2 Thess. iii. 8 ; etc. It has nothing to do with Jewish methods of reckoning time from evening to evening. 'Day

and night ' is frequent in both O.T. and N.T. As in English, one order is as natural as the other. Of course he does not mean that he worked all through the 24 hours. He worked hard, and he often worked at night.

**to avoid being burdensome]** The verb (*ἐπιβαρεῖν*) occurs again in the same connexion 2 Thess. iii. 8. Cf. 2 Cor. ii. 5. This proved that there was no greed. They did not preach for what they could get. In case of necessity the Apostle was willing to receive alms from one Church when he was preaching in another, but never from the Church in which he was working. At Thessalonica he more than once received help from Philippi, as he tells us Phil. iv. 16. But he took care that it should never be possible to say that he shaped his preaching to please his hearers and get maintenance from them ; 2 Cor. xi. 7, xii. 13. Chrysostom infers from this that most of the Thessalonian converts were poor. This is probable ; but the ' chief women ' at Thessalonica would doubtless have entertained the missionaries, had they been willing to accept hospitality.

**we preached to you]** The meaning may be ' into you,' so that the message would abide in their hearts (*εἰς ὑμᾶς*). See on iv. 8 and cf. Mk. xiii. 10 ; Lk. xxiv. 47 ; 1 Pet. i. 25.

**10. ye are witnesses and God also]** Cf. *vv.* 1, 5. The Thessalonians knew the whole of their conduct ; God knew this and also their hearts. Cf. 2 Cor. v. 11 ; 1 Sam. xii. 3.\*

**religiously and righteously]** These two adverbs can here hardly be separated, as if ' religiously ' (*ὁσίως*) were confined to the duty to God and ' righteously ' (*δικαίως*) to the duty to man. Both refer to both duties, as also does ' free from all reproach ' (*ἀμέμπτως*), which recurs iii. 13, v. 23. Cf. *ἀμεμπτος* Phil. ii. 15, iii. 6 ; Lk. i. 6 ; often in Job. We have adverbs rather than adjectives, because action rather than personal character is described.

\* Weinel finds fault with the Apostle's occasional appeals to God as a witness (Rom. i. 9 ; 2 Cor. i. 23 ; Phil. i. 8), which he thinks may have been " merely an old Jewish habit " (*St. Paul, the Man and his Work*, p. 358).

**we behaved ourselves towards you]** The Greek (ὡμῶν ἐγενήθημεν) may mean 'we made ourselves yours,' treating the dative as possessive, as in Rom. vii. 3. Or it might mean 'we behaved ourselves in the opinion of you'; but the context is against this.

**who believe]** Emphatic. Believers had a special claim on them; Gal. vi. 10. There is no suggestion that unbelievers were unrighteously treated; but the believers who are addressed had special knowledge of the blameless conduct of the preachers.

**II. as you very well know]** See on i. 5.

**to each one of you]** Emphatic. Every individual was an object of paternal care; not one was overlooked or neglected. This would not be difficult. The number of converts was probably only a few hundreds. Chrysostom assumes a large number, and expresses astonishment at this minute carefulness. Cf. 2 Thess. i. 3; 1 Cor. xii. 18; Eph. iv. 7, 16; Col. iv. 6; etc.

**as a father]** They received both a mother's affection and tenderness (v. 7) and a father's thought and counsel; in both respects as 'their *own* children.' Cf. 1 Cor. iv. 14; 2 Cor. vi. 13; Gal. iv. 19; 1 Tim. i. 2, 18; 2 Tim. i. 2, ii. 1; Tit. i. 4.

**exhorting]** The verb (παρακαλεῖν) is cognate with 'appeal' (παράκλησις) in v. 3. See on iii. 7.

**encouraging]** Getting them to persevere in the good course which they have begun; cf. v. 14.

**protesting]** Lit. 'calling to witness' (μαρτυρόμενοι), and hence testifying, 'asseverating'; cf. Gal. v. 3; Eph. iv. 17; Acts xx. 26, where it is one of the many Pauline expressions which occur in the speech at Miletus. Cf. διεμαρτυράμεθα, iv. 6; νουθετοῦντας, v. 12, κοπιῶντας, v. 12. Παράκλησις movet, ut facias aliquid libenter; παραμύθιον, ut cum gaudio; τὸ μαρτυρεῖσθαι, ut cum timore (Bengel).

**12. walk]** A frequent metaphor in Scripture (and especially in the Pauline Epistles) for general behaviour; iv. 1. 12; 2 Thess. iii. 6, 11; etc.



worthily of the God] The one and true God, as in i. 2. Cf. Col. i. 10 ; 3 Jn. 6.\*

who is the Inviter] Cf. v. 24 ; 2 Thess. ii. 14 ; 1 Cor. i. 9 ; Gal. v. 8 ; Col. iii. 15 ; 1 Tim. vi. 12. With ' the Inviter ' compare ' the Deliverer ' in i. 10. In both cases we have the present participle with the article. The verb here (*καλεῖν*) is often used of invitations ; Mt. xxii. 3, 9 ; Lk. vii. 39, xiv. 7-9. The meaning is that God is the Inviter to whom they owe their admission into the Kingdom, and that they must habitually live in a manner which befits such a privilege. It does not mean that He is now inviting them into a Kingdom which they have not yet entered. Throughout the N.T. the Kingdom of God is both a privilege possessed and a prize to be won. The Parable of the Supper may have been known to St. Paul (Lk. xiv. 16 f ; Mt. xxii. 1 f.), and may have influenced his language. See Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, p. 118.

It was the Apostle's persistent preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of God and of Christ as King which laid him open to the charge of treason. This had been the case at Thessalonica ; ' saying that there is another king, one Jesus,' Acts xvii. 7.

St. Paul does not explain what he means by the Kingdom. The idea and expression had long been current, and had been emphasized and illuminated by the teaching of Christ. It is therefore assumed that all Christians, even those who are as yet babes in Christ, are familiar with it. Throughout the N.T. it is spoken of, sometimes as present, but more often as future. In the same Epistle we find both views. In 1 Cor. iv. 20 the Kingdom is regarded as present ; in vi. 9 and xv. 50 it is regarded as future. The former view is found also in Rom. xiv. 17 ; Col. i. 13, 14, and perhaps

\* *Nemo alius est Deo dignus, quam qui opes contempsit. Quarum possessionem tibi non interdico : sed efficere volo, ut illas intrepide possideas* (Seneca, *Ep.* xviii. 10). *In regno nati sumus : Deo parere libertas est* (Ibid., *De Vita Beata*, xv. 6). A heathen could see that the possession of riches, though lawful, is morally perilous ; and that true freedom is found in obedience to the Divine Law.

iv. 11. The latter view is found Gal. v. 21; Eph. v. 5. In the main the two views correspond to the two Advents of Christ. The passage before us might be interpreted as being in harmony with either view; but what is specially meant is the existing spiritual Kingdom which the Thessalonians had already entered. Nowhere in his Epistles does St. Paul show any sympathy with "the realistic eschatology of a visible reign of the Messiah upon earth." A. Robertson, *Regnum Dei* (the *Bampton Lectures* for 1901), pp. 49 f.; also Robertson and Plummer on 1 Cor. iv. 20 and vi. 9, and Hastings' *DCG.* art. 'Paul,' II. p. 891.

ii. 13-16. RENEWED THANKSGIVING FOR THEIR CON-  
VERSION AND FOR THEIR PATIENCE UNDER  
PERSECUTION

<sup>13</sup> For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not as the word of men but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. <sup>14</sup> For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God which in Judæa are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews: <sup>15</sup> Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: <sup>16</sup> Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

Having appealed to their readers' experience of the integrity, industry, and affection with which the Gospel had been preached to them, the writers again burst out into thanksgiving to God for the results of their labours.

<sup>13</sup> 'Seeing that you are well aware of all that we have done for you and felt for you, we also on our part render thanks to our God unceasingly, because when you received with your ears the word from us, which was really from our God, you welcomed it not as a word from men, but with all the reverence due to what in fact it is, a word from God, a word which was not only welcomed by you but is also working effectually in you in virtue of your faith. <sup>14</sup> We know that this is so, for in Christian endurance you became imitators, Brethren, of the very earliest Assemblies of God, viz. those which are in Judæa,

having Christ Jesus as Lord. You imitated them in that you also suffered the very same kind of treatment at the hands of your own fellow-countrymen that they themselves also did at the hands of the Jews. <sup>15</sup> The Jews slew both the Lord in slaying Jesus, and also their Prophets, and they violently drove us out from among them. To God they are displeasing, and to the whole human race they are enemies, <sup>16</sup> seeing that they would fain forbid us to speak to the Gentiles to the end that they may be saved. This is only what one might expect ; for they must fill to the full the measure of their own sins at all times, past and present. But (although they are not aware of it) the wrath of God is already upon them to make an end of them.'

13. We also on our part] This answers to 'you yourselves know' in v. 1. Having appealed to the Thessalonians' experience of them as missionaries, they now thank God for their own experience of the Thessalonians as converts. Lightfoot (on Col. i. 9) thinks that here, as there, "the *καί* denotes the *response* of the Apostle's personal feeling to the favourable character of the news." In both places we have *διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡμεῖς*. Others take *καί* as meaning 'we as well as every true Christian who hears of the conduct of you Thessalonians.' Others interpret, 'we give thanks as you say that you do'; and this interpretation is assumed to imply a letter from the Thessalonians to the Apostle which Timothy had brought when he returned from his mission. Even if the interpretation were correct, the assumption would be doubtful. Timothy might report that the Thessalonians were thankful.

unceasingly] See on i. 2.

received with your ears the word from us] Lit. 'received a word of hearing from us,' *i.e.* a message delivered by word of mouth by us. Cf. 'received' (*παραλαμβάνω*, as here) iv. 1 and Col. ii. 6.

really from our God] This corrects the impression that 'from us' means that the missionaries originated it. It perhaps also corrects a Jewish insinuation that the Gospel was not from God, but was a mere human invention.

welcomed it] Not merely heard it with their ears, but embraced it and appropriated it in their hearts. Cf. i. 6, where the same expression is used.

In the Greek we have two verbs (*παραλάβοντες . . . ἐδέξασθε*), not the same verb repeated, as the Vulgate and the A.V. imply.

**is also working effectually]** The verb (*ἐνεργεῖται*) is one of which St. Paul is very fond ; 2 Thess. ii. 7 ; Rom. vii. 5 ; 2 Cor. i. 6, iv. 12 ; Gal. v. 6 ; etc. When he uses the middle, it is always of things, not persons ; see J. A. Robinson, *Ephesians*, pp. 241 ff. ; Mayor and Ropes on Jas. v. 16.

**in virtue of your faith]** 'In you that believe' (R.V.) is exact, as in *v.* 10, but does not sufficiently bring out the point that even God's word cannot have its proper effect unless it is met by faith on the part of the hearer.

**14. you became imitators]** It was stated in i. 6 that the Thessalonians imitated their teachers in their manner of life. Here it is stated that they imitated them and other first Christians in being persecuted by their own countrymen. Of course in the latter case the imitation was involuntary ; indeed, not in intention. It was their steadfastness under persecution that was voluntary.

**Brethren]** See on i. 4.

**Assemblies of God]** Cf. 2 Thess. i. 4 ; 1 Cor. xi. 16. The addition 'of God' (*τοῦ Θεοῦ*) after 'Assembly' or 'Church' (*ἐκκλησία*) is frequent in the Pauline Epistles, and is peculiar to them ; 1 Cor. i. 2, x. 32, xi. 22, xv. 9 ; 2 Cor. i. 1 ; Gal. i. 13. The addition distinguishes Christian 'Assemblies' from those of the heathen, who used the same word. In Acts we read of 'Churches' on the sea-board, in Galilee, and in Samaria.

**having Christ Jesus as Lord]** See on i. 1. This addition (lit. 'in Christ Jesus') distinguishes Christian 'Assemblies' from those of the Jews, who also used the same word. Cf. Gal. i. 22. The order 'Christ Jesus' occurs again, *v.* 18, and is almost, if not wholly, confined to the Epistles of St. Paul, Acts xvii. 3, xviii. 5 being doubtful. In this order the two words have become a proper name. In the more familiar order, 'Jesus Christ,' it is probable that at first 'Christ' was to some extent a title ; but soon both 'Jesus



Christ ' and ' Christ ' became merely a proper name. Sanday, *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 289 f.

**You also suffered]** Note the double ' also ' and ' the very same ' (τὰ αὐτὰ . . . καὶ ὑμεῖς . . . καθὼς καὶ αὐτοί) emphasizing the exact similarity between the cases. Cf. 2 Cor. i. 6.

**at the hands of your own fellow-countrymen]** It was in this that the remarkable imitation consisted, ' Fellow-countrymen,' lit. ' fellow-tribesmen ' (συμφυλέται), occurs nowhere else in the N.T. Cf. ' fellow-citizens ' (συμπολῖται) Eph. ii. 19. It was ' certain vile fellows of the rabble ' (and therefore heathen) in Thessalonica who were instigated by the Jews to persecute ; Acts xvii. 5-8. The heathen relations of the converts would be very bitter, and especially those of ' the chief women.'

**they themselves also]** The members of the Churches in Judaea. This Christ foretold ; Mt. x. 17 f. Contrast Acts ix. 31.

**at the hands of the Jews]** Nowhere else does St. Paul speak of ' the Jews ' in this way as denoting the enemies of Christ and His followers, a use so common in the Fourth Gospel ; but 2 Cor. xi. 4 f. is somewhat similar. He elsewhere speaks very differently of his fellow-countrymen ; Rom. iii. 1, 2, ix. 1-5, x. 1, 2. But at the time when this letter was written he had been suffering greatly from the bitter hostility of the Jews, who by violence, calumny and base insinuations were ceaselessly impeding his missionary work among the Gentiles in Europe, at Thessalonica, at Beroea, and at Corinth. He had come to regard them as agents of Antichrist. Consequently at the mention of the Jews he goes off in a burst of indignation, as he thinks how his own work has been hindered and how much his beloved converts have had to endure. The outburst is so natural that there is little reason for suspecting that either the whole passage, or at any rate the last severe sentence of it, may be an interpolation.\* Cf. 2 Thess. i. 8, iii. 2.

\* " The first two clauses of v. 16 bear in the highest degree the Pauline stamp. In form, the same is true of the abrupt conclusion, for which a quotation from some Jewish Apocryphon or a gloss

**15. slew both the Lord in slaying Jesus]** In the Greek 'the Lord' is separated from 'Jesus,' and this brings both terms into prominence. This effect is lost when they are put together in the common expression, 'the Lord Jesus,' as in A.V. and R.V. 'Who slew Jesus the Lord' would be better. This was a crime atrocious in its enormity and folly. In His Divine character they owed Him worship; in His human character they owed Him gratitude and love; and yet they killed Him. Cf. Acts ii. 36. There may be an allusion to the meaning of 'Jesus'; they slew their Lord, for they slew their Saviour. The 'both' (*καί*) anticipates the 'and also' (*καί*) which follows.

**and also slew their Prophets]** Their supreme crime in slaying the Lord was in complete harmony with their previous conduct, as Christ had shown them in His denunciations and in the Parable of the Unrighteous Husbandmen. It is possible that this mention of slaying the Prophets intimates that some Christians had been slain in the persecutions at Thessalonica. See on iv. 13. The concluding words of St. Stephen's speech (Acts vii. 51, 52), which the 'young man named Saul' probably heard, are a striking parallel to this indictment.

**violently drove us out]** The compound verb (*ἐκδιώκειν*), which occurs here only in the N.T., implies violent expulsion; cf. Deut. vi. 19; Joel ii. 20. 'Persecute' (*διώκειν*) does not necessarily imply expulsion. The brethren had been obliged to send Paul and Silvanus out of Thessalonica; Acts xvii. 5-10; cf. xiv. 5, 6, 19, xvii. 13, 14.

A different arrangement of the clauses is grammatically possible; 'who both slew the Lord in slaying Jesus, and violently drove out the Prophets and ourselves.' This

has been—quite superfluously—suggested. Indeed, both verses read like echoes from an angry indictment lately flung in the face of his persecutors by St. Paul. I can thus see no sufficient ground for removing verses ii. 15 and 16, or even only the last part of 16 as interpolations, from the genuine Epistle of St. Paul" (Jülicher, *Intr. to N.T.*, p. 60). See also Hort, *Judaistic Christianity*, p. 90. De Wette says that such objections arise from subjective views capable of being met by similar views of equal value.

makes good sense, but it is less probable than the other rendering. Cf. Rom. xi. 3 ; Mt. xxiii. 31, 37 ; 1 Kings xix. 14. In either case we have the worst crime placed first, as is natural, with an inverted climax ; ' slew their Lord, slew their Prophets, expelled us,' or, ' slew their Lord, expelled their Prophets, expelled us.'

**To God they are displeasing]** Lit. ' are not pleasing.' A mournful description, which is all the more telling by being a manifest understatement. Their conduct was an abomination to God. The rendering, ' who defy God,' spoils the effect by making the statement so strong ; and the idea of defiance is not implied by the wording. ' To please God ' is a common Biblical expression for living a godly life ; iv. 1 ; Rom. viii. 8 ; 1 Cor. vii. 32.

**to the whole human race they are enemies]** Juvenal (xiv. 103 f.), Tacitus (*Hist.* v. 5), and other writers show that the heathen regarded the Jews as an unsociable and unfriendly race. They had strange customs and rites, which cut them off from intimacy with other men and often made them actively hostile. St. Paul, however, condemns them on other grounds.

**16. seeing that they would fain forbid us to speak to the Gentiles]** This verse is strikingly similar in tone to Christ's words in Mt. xxiii. 29 f. ; Lk. xi. 48 f. For other possible echoes of Christ's Sayings see on i. 10, ii. 12, iii. 3, 13, iv. 8, v. 2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 15. Of all the elements in the Gospel which made it repugnant to the Jews hardly anything was more unwelcome than the proclamation that they had no monopoly of the Messianic Kingdom, but that salvation was open to Jew and Gentile alike. Cf. Acts v. 17, xiii. 45-50, xvii. 5, xviii. 5, 6, xxii. 21, 22, xxvi. 20, 21. Some Jews thought that one of the joys of heaven would be seeing the Gentiles in misery outside the Kingdom. The spirit which would exclude others from the benefits which are enjoyed by oneself is utterly opposed to the workings of Divine Love ; and this spirit is at its worst when it persistently endeavours to prevent the blessings of the Gospel from being extended beyond one's own circle. No wonder that

the experience of such behaviour kindles the Apostle's wrath !

**to the end that they may be saved]** This was the purpose of the missionaries' speaking. Rom. xi. 14 ; 1 Cor. ix. 22, x. 33 ; 1 Tim. iv. 16.

**for they must fill to the full]** The expression (εἰς τὸ ἀναπληρῶσαι) seems to combine the notions of consequence and intention. This was the result of their previous misconduct, and it was God's will that it should be so. Cf. Gen. xv. 16, 'The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full,' which may be in the Apostle's mind ; also Dan. viii. 23, 'When the transgressors are come to the full' ; and 2 Macc. vi. 14, 'In the case of the other nations the Sovereign Lord doth with long-suffering forbear, until that He punish them when they have attained to the full measure of their sins,' and especially Mt. xxiii. 32, 'Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.'

**of their own sins]** The pronoun (αὐτῶν) is emphatic.

**at all times]** At every moment in their history (πάντοτε) they were continually doing this : each generation filled up its own amount of sin in full measure. Cf. 'Ye do always (ἀεί) resist the Holy Spirit' ; Acts vii. 51. See on iv. 17 for πάντοτε.

**the wrath of God is already upon them]** In i. 10 the Divine wrath is spoken of as approaching. Here it is regarded as having come, and there is a suggestion that those on whom it has come are not aware of its arrival (ἔφθασεν ἐπὶ, as in Mt. xii. 28 and Lk. xi. 20). It has overtaken them more speedily than was anticipated ; v. 2 ; Mt. xxiv. 50 ; Lk. xxi. 34. See Hastings' *DAC.* art. 'Anger,' p. 65.

**to make an end of them]** *Um Ihnen den Garaus zu machen* (De Wette). *Bis zum Äussersten* (Wohlenberg). The words (εἰς τέλος) may mean either 'to an end,' 'finally,' or 'to the uttermost,' 'completely' ; Mt. x. 22 ; Lk. xviii. 5 ; Jn. xiii. 1 ; Josh. viii. 24 ; Job xx. 7 ; Psalms of Sol. i. 1, ii. 5. Either meaning would give the same result. The Divine wrath, long threatened, and at intervals partially exhibited, has now reached its final and complete stage,



that of utter destruction. They tried to prevent the heathen from being saved from perdition, and thereby have brought perdition on themselves. The form of the statement may be of Jewish origin. It occurs in the Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, *Levi* vi. 11 (see below) ; cf. *The Secrets of Enoch* xliv. 2 ; *Jubilees* xliv. 2.

About 20 years later than this Letter Jerusalem with its Temple was destroyed, and it is possible that St. Paul has here some thought of our Lord's predictions of that event, reports of which had doubtless reached him. In 2 Thess. ii. 1-11 (which is doubtless his work) he shows knowledge of the discourse which is reported in Mt. xxiv. respecting the destruction of Jerusalem. In that case the past tense (*ἐφθασεν*) is used of that which is so certain to happen that it is spoken of as having happened, as is often the case in predictions. But the Apostle's main thought seems to be that of a threatened judgment which has come at last and is already operative. In that case the past tense is to be understood literally, viz. of the judicial blindness which has come upon the Jews. It caused them to confound ritual with religion, to strain out gnats while they swallowed camels, and to think that they offered God service in defaming His Gospel and persecuting His messengers. This was the beginning of an end which could no longer be averted, and the Apostle and his contemporaries believed that it was very near ; *ἐγγὺς ἐφέστηκεν* (Chrys.). Cf. Rom. i. 28.

We may regard it as fairly certain that the similar words in the Testaments, *Levi* viii., are a Christian interpolation, or have been modified by a translator or editor who was familiar with 1 Thessalonians. Burkitt in *JTS.*, 1908, p. 138 ; Plummer, *St. Matthew*, 1909, p. xlv. The first Armenian recension of the Testaments omits *Levi* vi. 11. Some critics think that the sentence here is a marginal gloss, added after the destruction of Jerusalem, which is an unnecessary conjecture. Frame gives a summary of the various arguments.\*

\* A cheap edition of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs edited by Oesterley, is published by the S.P.C.K.

ii. 17-iii. 10. THE WRITERS' ANXIETY ABOUT THEIR  
CONVERTS, UNTIL REASSURED BY TIMOTHY

<sup>17</sup> But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time, in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire. <sup>18</sup> Wherefore we would have come unto you (even I Paul) once and again; but Satan hindered us. <sup>19</sup> For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? <sup>20</sup> For ye are our glory and joy. iii. <sup>1</sup> Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone; <sup>2</sup> And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellow-labourer in the Gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith: <sup>3</sup> That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto. <sup>4</sup> For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass and ye know. <sup>5</sup> For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain. <sup>6</sup> But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also *to see* you: <sup>7</sup> Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith: <sup>8</sup> For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God, <sup>10</sup> Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

From the strong condemnation of the blind and bitter hostility of the Jews the writers return to the subject of their own affectionate intercourse with the Thessalonians, in which the enemy had made a temporary breach. They had been compelled to go away and to remain away. Their intense affection for their converts had made this enforced absence from them a time of torturing anxiety as to their condition under the continued persecution. Since it was impossible for all three of them to return to Thessalonica, Timothy went thither for a while, and the report which he brought back to Paul and Silvanus greatly cheered them.

It is illuminating to remember that eight or nine months before these deeply affectionate words (which are of trans-

parent sincerity) were written, not one of the three missionaries, so far as we know, had any acquaintance with any one in Thessalonica. These strong bonds of love had been forged and fixed by the Gospel ; and St. Paul finds relief in letting his converts know the strength of them. He is not ashamed to confess the full force of these longings.

Owing to the strong emotion of the Apostle in dictating, the opening sentence is long and condensed, and requires to be broken up in English.

<sup>17</sup> But as for ourselves, Brethren, we had to be separated from you, and the separation was to us a veritable bereavement, like that between child and parent. It is true that the separation had been but for a short interval, and was a separation of face only, while you were never out of our thoughts. Yet this made our endeavours to see your face again not less but greater ; indeed, it was an intense desire that had possession of us. <sup>18</sup> Because it was so intense we had resolved to come to you—indeed I Paul had done so more than once—and each time the way was blocked by Satan. <sup>19</sup> I say that we passionately desired to revisit you. For what ground of hope, or source of joy, or crown of exultation have we got ? Why, none, if you are not such—you who are the crown to be worn by us in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming. <sup>20</sup> Yes, truly, it is you who are our title to glory and our source of joy.

iii. <sup>1</sup> Accordingly, being unable any longer to bear up against this separation of all of us from you, we were delighted to hit upon this plan ;—Paul and Silvanus to be left behind at Athens in our loneliness, <sup>2</sup> while Timothy was sent to you, Timothy our brother and God's fellow-helper in spreading the Gospel of Christ. We sent him in order that he might inspire you with confidence and encouragement for the furtherance and vindication of your faith,<sup>3</sup> so that none of you should be allured into betraying it, in the pressure of the persecutions which are now afflicting you and us alike. We need not insist on this, for you yourselves know that affliction is our appointed lot. <sup>4</sup> You know it, for (besides other facts) when we were with you we repeatedly gave you this warning, that all we Christians have to endure afflictions ; that is what we have to expect. And this is exactly what has actually happened, and what you know must happen. <sup>5</sup> Because these afflictions have befallen you, and because I on my part could no longer bear up, I sent Timothy, so that I might have knowledge of your faith, for fear that, as the Tempter had tempted you, our labour among you should prove to have been to no purpose. <sup>6</sup> But, so far from this being the case, Timothy has just now returned to us from you and has brought us the Good-tidings of the steadfastness of your faith and the

glow of your love ; telling us that you retain an affectionate remembrance of us at all times, for you are always yearning to see us again, just as we also are to see you. <sup>7</sup> Such excellent news encouraged us, Brethren, thanks to you ; we were in great necessity and affliction, and it was your faith which restored us. <sup>8</sup> For now that we are thus reassured about you, we feel alive again, if only you are standing fast in the Lord. <sup>9</sup> I say ' feel alive again,' for how can we express an adequate thanksgiving to God for what you are to us,—for all the intense joy which we feel for your sakes before the presence of our God, <sup>10</sup> while night and day we make fervent supplication to Him, to the end that we may see your face and make good whatever shortcomings there may be in your faith.

17. But as for ourselves, Brethren] The ' But ' (δέ) resumes the main subject after the outburst against the Jews and compares the preachers' condition with that of their converts. The Jews had hinted that the preachers had forgotten their converts and were afraid to return. The affectionate address is an assurance of continued remembrance and solicitude. The whole passage gives a vivid impression of the depth and constancy of the Apostle's love for his spiritual children.

the separation was to us a veritable bereavement] The striking expression (ἀπορφανισθέντες ἀφ' ὑμῶν) occurs nowhere else in N.T. It implies that the three teachers felt like orphans ; and ' orphan ' in Greek may apply to loss of friends and of children as well as to loss of parents. The parental relationship is probably in the writers' mind ; vv. 7, 11. As Chrysostom remarks, they do not say ' separated from,' or ' severed from ' or the like, but ' orphaned from ' ; and they do not say ' you were orphaned,' but ' we were.' Cf. Acts xxi. 1.

for a short interval] This was the case at the time mentioned ; it was soon after their expulsion from Thessalonica that they had these feelings. The course of events, however, made the separation a long one. The exact phrase (πρὸς καιρὸν ὥρας), ' for the season of an hour,' occurs nowhere else. It combines ' for a season ' (πρὸς καιρόν, Lk. viii. 13 ; 1 Cor. vii. 5) with ' for an hour ' (πρὸς ὥραν, Jn. v. 35 ; 2 Cor. vii. 8) ; and it is perhaps stronger than either. The Jews



had perhaps suggested that Paul did not care for his converts, and never intended to return to them.

**face only . . . thoughts]** Out of sight, but not out of mind. This was a second alleviation of the bereavement; there was no alienation of heart. The same verbal antithesis (*προσώπῳ . . . καρδία*) occurs 2 Cor. v. 12; cf. 1 Cor v. 3.

**to see your face]** Cf. iii. 10; Col. ii. 1; also 2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 14. Close personal intercourse is implied.

**not less but greater]** This may mean, either that the short time since the separation increased rather than weakened the desire to see them again, or that the fact of there being no alienation of heart did this.

**had possession of us]** They were in the grip of an intense desire (*ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ*), like persons obsessed (*ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ*, Mk. i. 23, v. 2). For similar desire and delay cf. Rom. i. 13, xv. 22, 23; 1 Cor. xvi. 5-7; 2 Cor. i. 16, xiii. 1; Phil. i. 8; Philem. 22; and for *ἐπιθυμία* in a good sense cf. Lk. xxii. 15; Phil. i. 23.

**18. I Paul]** The Apostle here distinguishes himself from Silvanus and Timothy. This again shows that the 1st pers. plur. throughout the Epistle includes Silvanus and Timothy. If it referred to Paul alone, there would be no need to make a distinction here. See on i. 2, ii. 4, 8, and Plummer on 2 Cor. i. 4. All three had the desire to come; St. Paul had it at least twice. This is not very clear; but apparently it means that all continually wished to come, and that St. Paul more than once attempted to come (Chrysostom). In iii. 5 and v. 27 he again speaks in the 1st pers. sing. Cf. 2 Cor. x. 1; Eph. iii. 1. Nowhere in his extant letters does he call himself 'Saul.' Deissmann, *Bible Studies*, pp. 316 f.; Ramsay, *St. Paul*, pp. 81 f.

The A.V. here is misleading; 'once and again' belongs to 'I Paul,' not to 'we.' For *μὲν* without *δέ* cf. Rom. x. 1, xi. 13; 2 Cor. xii. 12, and see A. T. Robertson, *Gr. of Greek N.T.* pp. 1151 f.

**more than once]** Or, 'once and again.' Lit. 'both once and twice'; cf. Phil. iv. 16; Neh. xiii. 20. It probably

means exactly twice ; and this is some indication that at least six months had elapsed between the flight from Thessalonica and the writing of this letter. " Timothy's journey there and back would have occupied some time, and Paul's *repeated* plans of travelling thither cannot be fitted into a few weeks " (Jülicher, *Intr. to N.T.* p. 56).

and each time] ' And ' (R.V.), not ' But ' (A.V.). The Vulgate has *sed*. Cf. Rom. i. 13.

blocked the way] Lit. ' cut into ' ; broke up the way and rendered motion impossible. The verb (*ἐνκόπτειν*) occurs Gal. v. 7, and in the passive Rom. xv. 22. How the great Adversary of all good did this we are not told ; *egit per homines malos*, says Bengel. The conjecture that Acts xvii. 9 may mean that Paul's friends had given a pledge that he would not return, and that this was the obstacle, is untenable. If his friends did do this, he would not call it an act of Satan ; and if he had felt bound by this supposed pledge, he would never have thought of returning.\* More probably, the malady which he regarded as a ' messenger of Satan ' was the obstacle. See Plummer on 2 Cor. xii. 7.

19. crown of exultation] Or, ' chaplet to be proud of ' (*στέφανος καυχήσεως*) ; Prov. xvi. 31 ; Ezek. xvi. 12, xxiii. 42. It does not mean a royal crown (*διάδημα*), but such as is worn as a mark of prowess, or desert, or joy ; *στέφανον δόξης* (Jer. xiii. 18 ; cf. xiii. 11) ; *στέφανον εὐκλείας μέγαν* (Soph. *Aj.* 465). The Thessalonians will be such a crown for those who converted them, when all appear before the Divine Judge, a crown of which they can glory. See Lightfoot on Phil. iv. 1 ; Ropes on Jas. i. 12 ; Hastings' *DB.* art. ' Crown,' *DAC.* art. ' Boasting.'

Why, none, if you are not such] The punctuation and rendering are uncertain. The words are a parenthesis, and probably a question, in the middle of the verse ; ' For what is our hope or joy or glorying's crown (Or is it not you

\* The ' pledge ' or ' security ' (*τὸ ἱκανόν*), as a papyrus letter has shown, was probably bail for the appearance of Jason and his companions, when called up for trial. Rackham on Acts xvii. 9.

indeed?) before our Lord Jesus at His Coming? '\* But this is intolerably clumsy in English. Emotion has caused the Apostle to dictate a broken sentence, the form of which has to be modified in order to make the paraphrase intelligible. Probably the thought that he had ceased to care for the Thessalonians produced the interjected question. The general meaning is ; ' We have no hope or joy or crown, if you are not all these to us ; and it is you who will adorn us before the judgment-seat of Christ. If we can glory of any converts before Him, it is certainly of you.' Cf. ' Ye are our Epistle,' 2 Cor. iii. 2. The ' crown of righteousness ' in 2 Tim. iv. 8 is different. Here the main thought is, not that his labours will win salvation for himself, but that the salvation of his converts will be to him a great glory. Chrysostom thinks that this passes the love of parents.

**in the presence of our Lord Jesus]** In whose sight everything will have its true value and false claims will be of no avail ; cf. 2 Cor. v. 10. This appeal to Divine witness is frequent in 1 Thessalonians ; cf. i. 3, iii. 9, 13 : and the thought of souls saved being an honour to their minister at the Judgment is a favourite one with the Apostle ; Phil. ii. 16 ; 2 Cor. i. 14.

**at His Coming]** At the Second Advent. The Gospel which is preached in these two Epistles " might be described, not as the Gospel of the Cross of Christ, but of the Coming of Christ " (Jowett, p. 7). Hope, rather than Faith, is the prevailing thought. It reflects the intensity of the expectation that the Lord would almost immediately return. This expectation has been compared to the British expectation of the return of our own King Arthur. The similarity is only superficial. On the one hand, it was believed that Arthur had never died ; whereas it was of the essence of the Christian belief that Christ had died and risen again. And hence a much stronger point of difference. The expectation that Arthur would come again had little influence on men's lives even while the expectation was strong ; whereas

\* The *καί* is intensive, ' you indeed, you certainly ' ; not ' you also, you as well as others.'

the Christian expectation has had enormous influence all through the ages. Note the *αὐτοῦ* between the article and the noun ; it is therefore emphatic : cf. *τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι, τῇ αὐτοῦ αἵματι* (Rom. iii. 24, 25) ; also Tit. iii. 5 ; Heb. ii. 4.

This is the first use in the N.T. of a very important term (*παρουσία*) which is specially frequent in these two Epistles ; iii. 13, iv. 15, v. 23 ; 2 Thess. ii. 1, 8, 9 ; see also 1 Cor. xv. 23 ; Jas. v. 7, 8 ; 2 Pet. i. 16, iii. 4, 12 ; 1 Jn. ii. 28. It means literally ' presence,' and it was a technical term for the ' coming in state ' of a potentate or his representative (Neh. ii. 6), and it is used (as the above references show) by Jewish writers in the N.T. to express the Messiah's coming in glory. It does not occur in Mk., Lk., or Acts. We may perhaps infer that this use of the term is of Jewish origin. It is found in the Testaments, *Judah* xxii. 3, where, however, it may be an interpolation, for the Armenian omits. See Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 372 ; Brooke on 1 Jn. ii. 28 ; Hastings' *DB.*, I. pp. 755 f. It is possibly because only the good are under consideration, viz. the missionaries and their faithful converts, that St. Paul uses this term *Parousia* rather than ' Judgment ' or ' Day of Judgment.' The wicked are out of sight.

20. **Yes, truly it is you]** The connecting particle (*γάρ*) shows that this sentence is a confirmation of the question so awkwardly interjected into the previous verse. The ' you ' is emphatic. Cf. 1 Cor. ix. 10 for this use of *γάρ*.

**our title to glory]** ' There is no need for us to seek glory from *men* (v. 6) ; *you* are our glory before *Christ*.'

### iii. 1-10. THE MISSION OF TIMOTHY AND ITS HAPPY RESULTS

The division of chapters is unintelligently made, as is rather often the case in the N.T. A new chapter might have begun at ii. 17 ; but the connexion between ii. 17-20 and what now follows is too close for interruption.

This passage shows that the Epistle was written in Achaia during the Apostle's second missionary journey.



It implies that it was not written at Athens, as is erroneously stated in the late addition to the subscription ; and it tends to show that St. Paul had not previously written to the Thessalonians, or they to him. Had either letter been written, it would probably have been mentioned in this passage.

**i. bear up against]** As an air-tight or water-tight vessel resists pressure from air or water (*στέγειν*). Here and in v. 5 both A.V. and R.V. have 'forbear,' which does not seem to be the exact meaning.

**we were delighted]** See on ii. 8 ; the idea was adopted with alacrity and joy. 'We' includes Silvanus as joining in the sending, and Timothy as consenting to the arrangement.

**to be left behind]** The compound (*καταλειφθῆναι*) indicates that Timothy and Silvanus had followed the Apostle to Athens from Beroea. See Lightfoot.

**in our loneliness]** They would feel their banishment from their beloved and suffering Thessalonians all the more acutely through sending Timothy away ; they would miss both them and him. Their willingness to part with so beloved and so useful a colleague as Timothy was proof of their affectionate solicitude for their converts. Moreover, Athens was a place in which a Christian missionary might feel depressingly lonely. It was so full of evidence of the wrong kind of religious reverence, and so sadly wanting in the right kind ; Acts xvii. 16, 22, 32.

It is a little difficult to make what is said here agree with Acts xvii. 14, xviii. 5. There we are told that Silas and Timothy were left behind at Beroea and did not rejoin St. Paul until he reached Corinth. Here we find that all three were at Athens when Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica. We infer that both Silas and Timothy joined Paul at Athens, and were both sent away again on different missions, Timothy to Thessalonica, and Silas to Philippi or Beroea. Then both rejoined the Apostle at Corinth. In any case, the divergence in the accounts is evidence that this Epistle is not a forgery constructed out of Acts, as Baur and others have supposed.

2. **our brother**] Being young he had perhaps not taken a prominent part in the conversion of the Thessalonians and may have been hardly known to some of them.\* Hence this description of him ; he is the fellow-Christian of Paul and Silvanus (2 Cor. i. 1 ; Col. i. 1). But he is more than that, as what follows shows.

**God's fellow-helper**] He is not only 'a brother with us,' he is also 'a fellow-worker with God.' Such a description would strengthen his position with the Thessalonians, who might possibly wonder, and perhaps even resent, that so young a teacher had been sent to them. St. Paul is not here impressing upon them the great sacrifice which he made in parting with such a colleague when he was so much in need of comfort himself ; he is showing them what a competent worker they had received, and how rightly they had behaved in welcoming and trusting him. As Chrysostom puts it, the intention is to do honour to the Thessalonians rather than to Timothy. The expression is so startling that early copyists altered it ; some by changing 'fellow-worker' to 'servant' (*συνεργόν* to *διάκονον*) ; and others by omitting 'God's,' so that the whole phrase runs 'our brother and fellow-worker.' But the startling expression occurs 1 Cor. iii. 9, and it is doubtless genuine here. Cf. 3 Jn. 8. In 2 Macc. viii. 7, xiv. 5 'fellow-worker' occurs of rendering assistance to men.

It has been conjectured that Timothy took with him a letter from the Apostle to the Thessalonians. In that case the letter would probably have been mentioned here, and what is stated ii. 17 and iii. 1-5 would either have been omitted or expressed differently. See below on v. 6.

\* Bleek infers from this verse that Timothy was wholly unknown to the Thessalonians until he was sent on this mission ; that he had probably been left behind at Philippi, and did not rejoin Paul and Silvanus till they had reached Beroea. All that can safely be inferred from the verse is that some Thessalonians were not sufficiently aware of the value of Timothy as a teacher. On the Scriptural meanings of *ἀδελφός* see H. H. A. Kennedy, *Sources of N.T. Greek*, pp. 95 f., and Ropes on Jas. i. 2.

**the Gospel of Christ]** This probably means the Gospel which tells of Christ, the Good-tidings about Him. 'The Gospel of God' more probably means the Gospel which God sends ; ii. 2, 8, 9.

**inspire you with confidence and encouragement]** In 2 Thess. ii. 17 this is given as the work of Christ and God. 'Comfort' (A.V., R.V.) is not here the exact meaning of the verb (*παρακαλέσαι*) ; see on v. 7. The reference is to the persecution.

**for the furtherance and vindication of]** We need all this to bring out the full force of the preposition (*ὑπέρ*) ; 'concerning' is inadequate.

**3. allured into betraying it]** Wheedled away from it, coaxed into deserting it. The exact meaning of the verb (*σαίνεσθαι*) is uncertain ; possibly 'moved' (A.V., R.V.) or 'disturbed.' This is Chrysostom's interpretation (*θορυβεῖσθαι*). But more probably, from its use of a dog's wagging its tail, it means 'be fawned upon' or 'cajoled.' It occurs nowhere else in Biblical Greek, but in classical Greek it is repeatedly used in this sense. See Zahn, *Intr. to N.T.*, I. p. 222.

**the persecutions]** Evidently the Thessalonians were still suffering affliction, and it is possible that the Apostle himself was already enduring persecution at Corinth. He had certainly suffered at Thessalonica.

**you yourselves know]** See on i. 5 and ii. 1.

**is our appointed lot]** We are set or destined for it ; Acts ix. 16, xiv. 22, xx. 23 ; Rom. viii. 17, 18 ; Phil. i. 29 ; 2 Tim. iii. 12 ; etc. 'Our' includes all Christians ; Jn. xv. 20, xvi. 33 ; 2 Tim. ii. 12. The relation in which Christians stand to the world of necessity involves suffering. Christ had warned the disciples of this, and one or more of His Sayings may be in the Apostle's mind (Mk. x. 30 ; Mt. v. 11, 44, x. 23, xxiii. 34 ; Lk. xi. 49, xxi. 12 ; Jn. xv. 20, xvi. 2, 33). The history of Thessalonica has been marked by great affliction ; the massacre of its citizens by Theodosius in 370, and the capture of the city by the Saracens in 904, by the Normans in 1185, and by the Turks in 1430.

4. **besides other facts]** This is an additional reason, 'what is more' (*καὶ γάρ*). See on iv. 10.

**when we were with you]** Cf. 2 Thess. ii. 5, iii. 10 (*πρὸς ὑμᾶς*); also 1 Cor. xvi. 6; Gal. i. 18.

**gave you this warning]** 'Told of it beforehand'; iv. 6; 2 Cor. xiii. 2; Gal. v. 21. The Jews, to whom prosperity was a proof of God's favour, and affliction a proof of His wrath, had for centuries tormented themselves with the question, Why do the godly suffer? The Book of Job is an attempt to find an answer. Christ had said 'Blessed are those who mourn and are hated and persecuted,' and Scripture says that 'those whom God loves He chastens.' The solution is still imperfect; for affliction, like all God's gifts to us, may be abused, and may harden instead of heal. We are told to count it a joy when trials and temptations come upon us; and we are also told to pray that we may not be brought into such afflictions.\*

**have to]** It is sure to come (*μέλλομεν*); cf. Rom. viii. 13; Acts xvii. 31.

**what ye know must happen]** 'Must happen' is not expressed in the Greek, and 'what ye know *from experience*' may be right: but the other is more in harmony with the context.

One conjectures that Jews had been telling the converts that their afflictions showed that they had been befooled. They had been promised great happiness, and they had experienced great suffering; and no doubt the suffering was a judgment on them for listening to impostors. St.

\* *Calamitas virtutis occasio est. . . . Hos itaque Deus, quos probat, quos amat, indurat, recognoscit, exercet. . . . Digni visi sumus Deo, in quibus experiretur, quantum humana natura posset pati. . . . Quid mirum, generosos spiritus Deus tentat? . . . Ad contemnendam malorum potentiam animus patientia pervenit* (Seneca, *De Providentia*, iv. 6, 7, 8, 11, 12). *Patrium habet Deus adversus bonos viros animum, et illos fortiter amat: et, Operibus, inquit, doloribus, ac damnis exagitantur, ut verum colligant robur* (*Ibid.* ii. 4). All this is very close to Christian doctrine as set forth in such passages as Heb. v. 7, 8, xii. 3-11; Jas. i. 2-4, 12; Rev. iii. 19; Rom. v. 3-5, etc.



Paul's words seem to be an answer to this. He says, 'we warned you that there would be much affliction ; but it is of little account, in comparison with the joy which is being secured.'

5. **I on my part]** Cf. ii. 13. The Apostle took the lead in sending Timothy. But Silvanus agreed to this ; it is ' we ' in *v.* 1. Cf. ii. 18 and *v.* 27. Some infer that, as Timothy is not named again here, a second person, some ' quite subordinate person,' was sent. The inference is very precarious.

**could no longer bear up]** Here, as in *v.* 1, ' bear up,' rather than ' forbear,' is the meaning.

**as the Tempter had tempted you]** The difference of mood (*ἐπείρασεν . . . γένηται*) shows that the fear does not include the tempting, which was already a fact ; persecution had already taken place. He was afraid as to the possible effect ; persecution might cause apostasy. ' The Tempter ' (*ὁ πειράζων*) occurs elsewhere only Mt. iv. 3 ; it is not found in the LXX, and none of the Apostolic Fathers uses the term. Cf. Mt. vi. 13 ; Mk. i. 13 ; 1 Cor. vii. 5 ; and see Trench, *Syn.* § lxxiv.

**to no purpose]** Lit. ' to an empty result ' (*εἰς κενόν*), a frequent expression with St. Paul ; 2 Cor. vi. 1 ; Gal. ii. 2 ; Phil. ii. 16 (twice). It is frequent also in the LXX, especially in Isaiah and Jeremiah. Cf. ii. 1.

It is possible to take the whole as an indirect question instead of a fear ; '*enquiring whether* the Tempter had anyhow tempted you, and whether our labour among you would prove to have been to no purpose.' But the other is simpler.

The fact that the Apostle and his colleagues had been sent away from Thessalonica before the matter came before the Politarchs was disastrous, however necessary for their safety. When their case was tried, and they failed to appear, the Politarchs decided against them. Their teaching about a Kingdom and a King was condemned as ' contrary to the decrees of Caesar ' ; it was treason. This at once opened the door for the persecution of their adherents,

and the Jews availed themselves of the welcome opportunity. See Zahn, *Intr. to N.T.*, I. p. 218.

6. has just now returned] 'Just now' (ἄρτι) is emphatic. He had come at the very moment when he was specially wanted, when St. Paul was so anxious. The 'now' (νῦν) in v. 8 corresponds to 'just now' here. Timothy had rejoined him, not at Athens, but at Corinth; Acts xvii. 5. Some connect 'just now' with v. 7; 'But just now . . . such excellent news encouraged us.' This is awkward, with five clauses between adverb and verb. In any case, St. Paul writes at once.

brought us the Good-tidings] The expression (εὐαγγελισσαμένον ἡμῖν) is remarkable. Very rarely in the N.T., and nowhere else by St. Paul, is this verb used in any other sense than that of preaching the Gospel. Here (as Chrysostom points out) he might have said 'reported' (ἀπαγγείλαντος), as in i. 9 and 1 Cor. xiv. 25. But he uses a word which implies that the news was like a Gospel to them, it was so good. We may compare the use of 'bereavement' in ii. 17. These warm expressions are the result of his writing directly the welcome report reached him, while his heart was full of the intensity of his anxiety and of his relief. If the Thessalonians had written to the Apostle, the letter would surely have been mentioned here.

faith . . . love] Their faith had manifested itself in acts of love; i. 3; 2 Thess. i. 3; Jas. ii. 14, 26. See below on v. 7.

affectionate remembrance] Here, as in v. 15, 'good' (ἀγαθός) has the definite meaning of 'kind.' This was a special personal joy to St. Paul. He had evidently taken the hearts of the Thessalonian converts by storm.

at all times] Contrast the 'at all times' in ii. 16. The adverb (πάντοτε), although more closely connected with 'retain affectionate remembrance,' nevertheless influences 'yearning' also; the yearning and the remembrance were identical. *On peut dire que le christianisme primitif fut une sorte de romantisme moral, une énergique révolusion de la faculté d'aimer. Le christianisme ne diminua pas cette*

*faculté ; il la nourrit d'air et de jour* (Renan, *Saint Paul*, p. 243).

**yearning]** This yearning was *signum bonae conscientiae* (Bengel). The compound verb (ἐπιποθοῦντες) marks the emotional direction of the longing. St. Paul has it seven times ; elsewhere only Jas. iv. 5 and 1 Pet. ii. 2.

**just as we also]** With καθάπερ καί (here and v. 12) cf. καθὼς καί (Rom. xv. 7) and ὡσαύτως καί (1 Cor. xi. 25).

**7. encouraged us]** The verb (παρακαλεῖν) is frequent in this letter, meaning sometimes 'encourage,' sometimes 'comfort,' and sometimes 'exhort' (ii. 11, iii. 2, iv. 1, 10, 18, v. 11, 14).

**necessity and affliction]** The two terms (τῇ ἀνάγκῃ καὶ θλίψει) are combined 2 Cor. vi. 4, and both imply pressure and constraint. 'Affliction' (θλίψις) is very frequent in the LXX. It is perhaps rather fanciful to make 'necessity' refer to 'privations,' and 'affliction' to persecutions. The two substantives have only one article, as if not much difference of meaning were intended. There may be an allusion to persecution at Corinth. Cf. ii. 16, and see Plummer on 2 Cor. i. 4.

The parallel in 2 Cor. i. 8-10 should be compared, and also the revulsion of feeling caused by the report of Corinth brought by Titus to St. Paul in Macedonia, 2 Cor. ii. 12, vii. 5.

**it was your faith which restored us]** In two consecutive sentences their faith is mentioned. It is a very comprehensive term, and it denotes the basis of their Christian behaviour. It was their belief in the true God and in His Son, in His Resurrection and His Return, and in the certainty of the coming of the Kingdom, which characterized the Thessalonian converts, and which so delighted Timothy, and through him Paul and Silvanus, and filled their hearts with thankfulness.

**8. we feel alive again]** Partly through his afflictions, and partly through the perils in which he often lived, the Apostle could say, 'I die daily.' But under the influence of the Glad-tidings brought from Thessalonica he indeed has life.

News that the converts had apostatized would have been like a sentence of death to himself and to the cause of Christ in Macedonia and Achaia. Cf. Rom. viii. 36 ; 1 Cor. iv. 9, xv. 30, 31 ; 2 Cor. i. 9, iv. 10, 11, vi. 9, xi. 23 ; Acts xxi. 13.

if only you] The 'you' is emphatic.

are standing fast] A late and strong form of the verb 'to stand' (στήκειν) is used,\* and the construction (εἰάν with the indicative) implies a slight doubt followed by reassurance, 'if—but of course you *are* standing fast.' Cf. 1 Jn. v. 15, 'if we know, as of course we do know' (εἰάν οἶδαμεν).

Jowett, pp. 70-73, compares the treatment of the first Christians by the Roman Government and by the populace with the treatment of the first Methodists by the English authorities in Church and State and by the populace.

9. **express an adequate thanksgiving]** 'Adequate' comes from the first preposition in the compound verb (ἀνταποδοῦναι, here and 2 Thess. i. 6 ; Col. iii. 24). The second preposition (ἀπό) shows that thanksgiving is not really *giving* but *paying* ; it is rendering what is *due*. "Gratitude," as Dr. Johnson said, "is a kind of justice." Cf. v. 15 ; Mk. xii. 14, 16 ; Rom. xiii. 7. The question implies that an adequate thanksgiving is impossible ; but the Apostle at once expresses his deep gratitude, although words are but a poor expression of it. Cf. Lk. xviii. 14 ; Ps. cxvi. 12.

**for what you are to us . . . for your sakes]** The repetition gives emphasis (περὶ ὑμῶν . . . δι' ὑμᾶς). The Thessalonians are to understand what intense anxiety there has been on their account, and what intense joy and thankfulness their steadfastness has caused. The affectionate 'you' or 'your' (ὁμεῖς, ὑμᾶς, ὑμῖν, ὑμῶν) occurs ten times in six verses, 6-10.

**before the presence of our God]** This appeal proves the sincerity and purity of the joy : it can bear the inspection of God. See on ii. 19. The words are not part of v. 10.

**10. night and day]** See on ii. 9.

\* Cf. Judg. xvi. 26 of a building resting firmly on pillars ; also 1 Kings viii. 11 of the priests being unable to keep their position and minister.



**fervent]** The adverb (ὑπερεκπερισσού) occurs again v. 13 and Eph. iii. 20 ; 'in exceeding abundant measure' is the meaning.\* St. Paul is fond of strong compounds with ὑπέρ : cf. 2 Thess. i. 3 ; 2 Cor. xi. 5.

**make supplication]** This also is a strong word (δεόμενοι), which in the Epistles is peculiar to St. Paul. It is stronger than 'pray' (προσεύχεσθαι)

The construction suggests that the fervency of the supplication is in proportion to the thankfulness for the joy produced by Timothy's report. Thankfulness for spiritual gifts naturally leads to asking with increased confidence for an increase in the gifts.

**we may see your face]** Not till some years later was this prayer granted (Acts xx. 1, 2). The unemphatic position of ὑμῶν throws the emphasis on τὸ πρόσωπον. It is a *face to face* meeting that is desired. Similarly, in v. 13 the emphasis is on τὰς καρδίας. It is no mere physical strengthening that is desired. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, p. 416.

**make good]** From the idea of 'fitting together' (καταρτίσαι) the verb comes to mean 'to mend, correct, restore, make perfect' what is amiss or defective.

**shortcomings]** The word (ὕστέρημα) is almost peculiar to St. Paul in the N.T. ; 1 Cor. xvi. 17 ; 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14, ix. 12, xi. 9 ; etc. Enthusiastical joy about the converts' affection and steadfastness does not blind the Apostle's eyes to their defects, or prevent him from pointing them out. In the prayer that follows, it is the amending these that is emphasized. Cf. Rom. i. 11. The Thessalonians were still only babes in Christ and had much to learn both in doctrine and practice. 'Faith' covers both ; it is 'faith working by love.' Cf. i. 3, iii. 9.

### iii. 11-13. PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS

<sup>11</sup> Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you. <sup>12</sup> And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all *men*, even

\* It is a mistake to quote Dan. iii. 22 (Theodot.) in illustration. There the true reading is ἐκ περισσού.

as we *do* toward you : <sup>13</sup> To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

These verses show the kind of supplication which is being so earnestly made with regard to the two things just named, —the return of the missionaries to Thessalonica, and the building up of their converts' spiritual life. Success in either of these points is impossible without the assistance of God. Cf. v. 23, 24.

<sup>11</sup> Now may our God and Father Himself and our Lord Jesus remove all hindrances to our coming to you : <sup>12</sup> but, whether we come or not, may the Lord make *you* to increase and to abound in your love to one another and to all mankind in exactly the same measure that we increase and abound in our love to you : <sup>13</sup> and may He do this so as to establish your hearts and make them free from reproach in the matter of holiness, when you stand in the presence of our God and Father at the Coming of our Lord Jesus attended by all His holy ones !'

II. Now] The fact of the fervent supplication having been mentioned, the Apostle passes on (δέ) to express it.

our God and Father Himself] 'Himself' is emphatic and is in contrast to the writers, who have been foiled more than once in this matter. Nothing less than God's help will prove sufficient in a case of so much difficulty. As God He can do it, and as Father He will be willing to do it. Cf. Phil. iv. 2 and see Lightfoot on Gal. i. 5. Chrysostom points to 'the unrestrained frenzy of affection' which this language reveals. See on iv. 16 ; also on v. 23, where the opening words are the same.

Note the combination of 'our God and Father' with 'our Lord Jesus,' followed by a verb in the singular, as in 2 Thess. ii. 16, where 'our Lord Jesus Christ' is placed first.\*

\* Athanasius calls attention to the significance of the singular. St. Paul does not say *κατευθύνουσιν*, as of two distinct granters of the favour, but *κατευθύναι*, which secures the unity of the Father and the Son (*Orat. C. Arianos* iii. 11). Lightfoot notes that "this ascription to our Lord of a divine power in ordering the doings of men occurs in the earliest of St. Paul's Epistles, and indeed probably the earliest of the N.T. writings."

In both passages 'Himself' may belong to both, 'God' and 'Lord Jesus.' See on i. 1. This use of 'Himself' is characteristic; Rom. viii. 16, 26; 1 Cor. xv. 28; 2 Cor. xi. 14.

**remove all hindrances]** Make clear the way which has been broken up and blocked by Satan, ii. 18. Cf. 2 Thess. iii. 5 and Lk. i. 79, the only other passages in the N.T. in which the verb (*κατευθύνειν*) occurs. In all three passages it has its common meaning of Divine Providence controlling man's conduct. In the LXX it is frequent. Here we have the aorist optative, as in 2 Thess. ii. 17, iii. 5.

**12. but . . . the Lord make you to increase]** The 'you' is very emphatic. 'Whatever may be allowed to us with regard to returning to you, may the Lord make *your* life as Christians more fruitful.' The Apostle's stay in Thessalonica had been brief, probably less than six months, and much supplementary work was still needed. The remainder of this letter is an attempt to supply something.

'The Lord' probably means Jesus, who has just been so called in the preceding clause. St. Paul commonly speaks of Him as 'the Lord'; i. 6, iv. 15-17, and probably iii. 8, v. 27. In 2 Thess. iii. 5, 16 'the Lord' is addressed in prayer; cf. 2 Cor. xii. 8; 2 Tim. i. 16, 18; Acts vii. 59, 60. Thus in these very early Christian writings we have abundant evidence that already Jesus Christ was regarded as having essential equality with 'our God and Father,' and with Him ruling the world.

**love to one another]** There were Jews among the converts, and it is probable that there was some friction between them and the Gentile converts. See on v. 15.

**and to all mankind]** Their love is not to be limited to Christians; it must include their Jewish and heathen persecutors. Cf. Rom. xii. 14, 17, 19; Gal. vi. 10; 1 Tim. ii. 1; 1 Pet. ii. 17. *Il était commandé de faire du bien à tous; cependant, les coreligionnaires étaient reconnus digne d'une préférence* (Renan, p. 246).

**in exactly the same measure]** The preachers' love for their converts grew just as their converts grew in grace. The

news brought by Timothy would cause a large increase of affection. Cf. v. 6.

**13. to establish your hearts]** The substantive is here emphatic, as in ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον (v. 10). See E. A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar*, p. 416. There does not seem to be much point in Chrysostom's remark, that he does not say 'you' but 'your hearts,' for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts. The point is that outward conformity is not enough. We have the same phrase Jas. v. 8.

**holiness]** The word (ἀγιωσύνη) anticipates 'His holy ones' (τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ) below, and the two translations should correspond.

**in the presence of our God and Father]** Our God cannot be deceived as to the reality of the holiness, and our Father requires us to love all His children. See on v. 9.

**Coming]** See on ii. 19 and cf. 1 Cor. i. 8.

**all His holy ones]** The angels are included, and therefore 'holy ones' rather than 'saints.' In the N.T. 'the saints' (οἱ ἅγιοι) generally means 'holy men,' those who have been consecrated to God and are bound to lead holy lives; but in the LXX and later Jewish literature the angels are often so called, as in Zech. xiv. 5, which St. Paul seems to have in his mind. Cf. Dan. iv. 13, viii. 13; also 2 Esdr. vi. 26 and vii. 28, where those who are in Paradise seem to be meant. We may regard it as certain that 'those who are fallen asleep through Jesus' (iv. 14-16) are in St. Paul's mind here; and it is hardly less certain that the angels are included also. Note the 'all,' and cf. 2 Thess. i. 7; Mk. viii. 38; Mt. xvi. 27; Lk. ix. 26; Jude 14. The Apostle may have Christ's Saying in his mind. See p. xxv.

We must leave it in doubt whether he has here any thought of saints as assessors in the final judgment (1 Cor. vi. 3; Wisd. iii. 8; Dan. vii. 22), for the judgment itself is not mentioned.

Some important witnesses add 'Amen' at the end of this prayer. A liturgical lection may have ended here and in any case copyists may have inserted the word in accordance with liturgical usage. On the other hand copyists might



have omitted it as seeming to be unsuitable in the middle of a letter. But insertion, whether deliberate or mechanical, is more probable than omission.

Here the historical and personal portion of the Epistle comes to an end, and the division between the chapters is intelligently made. The letter would have a suitable conclusion if it ended here ; but the writers know that more remains to be said.

#### iv. 1-v. 24. HORTATORY AND DOCTRINAL

Admonition has now to be added to the vivid description of the relations which have existed and continue to exist between the writers and their converts. It has been incidentally mentioned in iii. 10 that 'shortcomings' are still found among the Thessalonians ; and in what follows they are exhorted to remedy these.

This second main portion of the letter, like the first, consists of five sections ; iv. 1-12, Exhortations to Purity, to Love of the Brethren, and to Honest Work ; iv. 13-18, Concerning them that fall asleep before the Advent of the Lord ; v. 1-11, The Uncertainty of the Time of the Advent and the Need of Watchfulness ; v. 12-22, Exhortations respecting Church Discipline and Holiness of Life ; v. 23, 24, Prayer for the Thessalonians. All five of these sections are eminently practical, and in this respect they have much in common with the Epistle of St. James. The first of them contains admonitions respecting elements of the Christian life in which the Thessalonians had seemed to be defective ; and the opening verses are a kind of general introduction to this second main portion of the letter.

#### iv. 1-12. EXHORTATIONS TO PURITY, TO LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, AND TO HONEST WORK.

iv. <sup>1</sup> Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort *you* by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, *so* ye would abound more and more.

<sup>2</sup> For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.  
<sup>3</sup> For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication : <sup>4</sup> That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour ; <sup>5</sup> Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God : <sup>6</sup> That no *man* go beyond and defraud his brother in *any* matter : because that the Lord *is* the avenger of all such ; as we also have forewarned you and testified. <sup>7</sup> For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. <sup>8</sup> He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his holy Spirit. <sup>9</sup> But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you : for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. <sup>10</sup> And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia : but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more ; <sup>11</sup> And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands (as we commanded you ;) <sup>12</sup> That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

<sup>1</sup> Seeing then, Brethren, that such has been our past condition (that we have laboured so much, and you have suffered so much, for the Gospel's sake, and that God has been so good to us both), we ask you as friends, and we exhort you as having authority in the Lord Jesus, to consider a further appeal. You received from our lips the lesson as to the manner in which you are bound to walk if you are to please God, as indeed you really are walking ; and we desire you now to do this still more fully than you have hitherto done. <sup>2</sup> I say that you received this lesson, for you know what careful precepts we gave you, not in our own name, but in that of the Lord Jesus. <sup>3</sup> For we told you that God's will, or (one may say) your training in holiness, lies in this,—to abstain from carnal impurity ; <sup>4</sup> that each one of you should know how to gain complete mastery of his own body, training it in holiness and treating it with reverence, <sup>5</sup> not allowing it to be in a state of lustful passion, which is just the state of the heathen also, who have no knowledge of God. <sup>6</sup> In this way a man avoids the temptation to transgress and to defraud his brother, in order to gratify his own desire. We give you this charge, because the Lord is an avenger of all sins of this kind, as indeed we told you beforehand and earnestly protested. <sup>7</sup> Of course He is such, for God did not call us to indulge in an unclean life, but to be ever engaged in perfecting holiness. <sup>8</sup> It follows from this that he who deliberately ignores what we have been saying is ignoring the authority, not of a man, but of the one God, who is ever giving His Spirit, the Spirit whose special characteristic is holiness, to dwell within you.

<sup>9</sup> There is another subject, that of love of the brethren, about which you have no need that we should write to you. For of your own

accord you have accepted God's teaching to the effect that you must love one another. <sup>10</sup> We say this the more confidently, for you are actively following this teaching in your conduct towards all the brethren in the whole of Macedonia. But we do exhort you, Brethren, to do this still more fully than you have hitherto done, <sup>11</sup> and to make a vigorous endeavour to keep quiet, and to attend each to his own affairs and to work at some handicraft, in exact accordance with the precepts which we gave you. <sup>12</sup> Our object in this is that you should live so as to be in good repute in your relations with your unbelieving neighbours, and should maintain an honourable independence.'

I. This new division opens with an expression (λοιπόν) which implies that a good deal has been said, but that the end has not been quite reached ; and it seems to show that what follows was not the main purpose of the letter. The main purpose was to defend the conduct and character of the writers, and to comfort and encourage the recipients. The rendering ' Finally ' is not altogether satisfactory, for what follows this expression may be of considerable length, as here ; and therefore ' Finally ' seems to come too soon,—too far removed from the actual end of the letter. Cf. 2 Thess. iii. 1 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 11 ; Phil. iii. 1, iv. 8 ; 2 Tim. iv. 8. Except in the last case, where it has *in reliquo*, the Vulgate rendering for λοιπόν and τὸ λοιπόν is *de caetero*. In the above paraphrase it is expanded.

**Brethren]** The admonition begins affectionately, and the connecting particle (οὖν), if it be genuine, looks back to iii. 13. See on i. 4 and ii. 1.

**we ask you as friends]** The verb (ἐρωτῶμεν) rather implies that the two parties are equals, whereas 'exhort' (παρκαλοῦμεν) assumes some kind of superiority over those who are exhorted. St. Paul uses the more friendly word only in his letters to the beloved Macedonian Churches ; v 12 ; 2 Thess. ii. 1 ; Phil. iv. 3. See Trench, *Syn.* § 40. The two verbs are found in combination in pre-Christian correspondence.

**in the Lord Jesus]** This is added to show that no personal superiority is claimed. It is 'in Christ' that they have the right to exhort ; and it is 'the Lord Jesus' to whom the Divine prerogative of bestowing this right is assigned.

Cf. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 12. The Greek sentence is irregular in structure, and it requires to be broken up in order to give the sense in smooth English.

**to please God]** See on ii. 15. The prayer in iii. 13 is in his mind.

**as indeed you really are walking]** Some texts omit this clause, but it may safely be retained.

**to do this still more fully]** This implies that they are already doing it to a laudable extent. With characteristic tact, the Apostle does justice to the goodness which already exists ; cf. v. 10, v. 11 ; 2 Thess. iii. 4 ; 2 Cor. ix. 1 ; Phil. i. 9. What is needed is further progress. They must make themselves more ready for the Advent. This use of ' still more ' (*μᾶλλον*) is characteristic ; iv. 10 ; 2 Cor. vii. 13 ; Phil. i. 23.

**2. for you know]** See on i. 5, ii. 1, 5, 11, iii. 3, 4. The point here is that no new demands are being made ; they are merely being reminded of previous instructions.

**careful precepts]** Rules of life, charges as to the essentials of Christian conduct. The word (*παραγγέλαι*) originally meant ' words of command ' which a subordinate officer received and passed on ; and hence it was used of instructions generally ; 1 Tim. i. 5, 18 ; Acts v. 28, xvi. 24. Cf. the Saying in Lk. x. 16 ; also (for *διά*) Rom. xv. 18 ; 1 Cor. ii. 10 ; Phil. i. 11.

**3. God's will . . . training in holiness]** These terms are in apposition ; both point in the same direction, viz. utter abstention from impurity. Moreover, while training ourselves in holiness we may be quite sure of Divine help, because we are working in absolute harmony with the Divine will. God wills our consecration. Among the heathen sensual indulgence was regarded very lightly and was treated almost as a matter of course, like eating and drinking. Cicero (*Pro Coelio*, 48) excuses it ; *quando reprehensum ? quando non permisum ?* Thessalonica was a large sea-port, with many wealthy and luxurious inhabitants. Such conditions favour immorality.

See Jowett's Essay in *St. Paul's Epistles*, II. pp. 74 f. ;



Hastings' *DAC.* art. 'Abstinence.' Hence the necessity of giving stringent charges against it to Gentile converts ; Acts xv. 20, xxi. 25 ; 1 Cor. v. 1, 9 ; 2 Cor. xii. 21 ; 1 Pet. iv. 1-4. 'God's will' (θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ), *i.e.* one of the things willed by Him, is a frequent expression with St. Paul ; v. 18 ; Rom. i. 19, xii. 2, xv. 32 ; 1 Cor. i. 1 ; etc.

training in holiness] The term (ἀγιασμός) implies a process, a process of self-consecration, and in it abstention from impurity plays an important part. In the N.T. the word is mainly Pauline ; 2 Thess. ii. 13 ; Rom. vi. 19, 22 ; 1 Cor. i. 30 ; 1 Tim. ii. 15.

This is one of several passages in these two chapters in which there is similarity with the Didaché. Here compare Did. iii. 3, where there is warning against πορνεία and μοιχεία. See on v. 13, 22.

to abstain from carnal impurity] The very words of the Apostolic decree (ἀπέχεσθαι πορνείας), which had been promulgated a year or two before the writing of this letter, and which St. Paul had helped to make known in the Churches of Asia Minor ; Acts xvi. 4. Cf. v. 22 ; 1 Pet. ii. 11. The Greek word covers not only fornication but other kinds of impurity also ; 1 Cor. v. 1 ; Mt. v. 32. *Chacune de ces Églises était pour lui comme une fiancée qu'il avait promise au Christ et qu'il voulait garder pure* (Renan, *Saint Paul*, p. 227).

4. **know how**] Cf. the use of 'know' in Mt. vii. 11. Purity, says Chrysostom, is "a thing that has to be *learned*" (μαθήσεως πρᾶγμα), a habit to be acquired.

to gain complete mastery of his own body] It is impossible to be certain of the meaning of the Greek (τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κατᾶσθαι), which may mean 'to take to himself a wife of his own.' This interpretation of the words makes good sense in harmony with v. 6 and 1 Cor. vii. 2. The ambiguous word (σκεῦος) means 'vessel,' and 'vessel' often means 'body,' as that which contains the soul or spirit ; 2 Cor. iv. 7. Instances are also found in which 'vessel' means 'wife.' But 1 Pet. iii. 7 is not in point, for there the wife is a 'weaker vessel' in reference to the Holy Spirit, not in reference to

her husband.\* The verb (*κτᾶσθαι*) does not mean 'possess' or 'keep' (which would be *κέκτησθαι*), but 'acquire' or 'gain,' and in the LXX it is used of winning a wife; Ruth iv. 10; Eccus. xxxvi. 24. Theodore of Mopsuestia and Augustine adopt this explanation: Chrysostom and Theodoret prefer the other; their argument is that when we purify our body from sin we make it our own (*κτώμεθα*); to which we may add that this charge is addressed to women as well as to men. Both views have found many supporters. In favour of Chrysostom's interpretation, which is adopted in the paraphrase, it has been shown from papyri that in the popular language the meaning of 'possess' was not confined to the perf. *κέκτησθαι* (see Milligan *ad loc.*). 'Gradually acquire full control' seems to be the most probable meaning. But we must leave the explanation of the phrase open.

A third explanation must be mentioned, not as being probable, but as being perhaps grammatically possible; and it has been adopted by a few scholars. They propose to separate 'know' (*εἰδέναι*) from 'gain' (*κτᾶσθαι*) and explain it as 'know' has to be understood in v. 12, viz. 'know the value of,' 'treat with respect.' The whole will then run thus; 'that each of you should respect his own wife, get her in the spirit of holiness and reverence, not in a state of lustful passion, etc.' It is difficult to believe that, if this had been meant, it would have been expressed in this harsh and ambiguous way.

**treating it with reverence]** Honour for the human body as something sacred is to a large extent a Christian idea. Heathen philosophers often regarded it with contempt. One of them said that he blushed at the thought of possessing a body; only the mind or soul was of value, and the body was a vile impediment.†

\* 'Weaker vessel' implies that *both* husband and wife are vessels or chattels: they are both of them pieces of furniture in God's house, the husband stronger, the wife weaker. But "we can hardly suppose St. Peter to be thinking only of the bodily weakness of the wife" (Bigg, *ad loc.*). See also Lightfoot on this passage.

† Contempt of human personality can hardly go deeper than in this attitude of Plotinus. And what does Neo-Platonism offer

**5. a state of lustful passion]** The expression (πάθει ἐπιθυμίας) implies that the person is overmastered and becomes the instrument of the lust.

**just the state]** We have the same word (καθάπερ) ii. 11, iii. 6, 12 ; like καθώς in i. 5, ii. 2, 4, 5, 13, 14, iii. 4, iv. 1, 6, 11, etc., it implies exact correspondence, and in the N.T. it is almost peculiar to the writings of St. Paul.

**who have no knowledge of God]** Cf. 2 Thess. i. 8 ; Gal. iv. 8. The words are a quotation from Jer. x. 25. Cf. Ps. lxxix. 6 ; Job xviii. 21 ; Judg. ii. 10 ; 1 Sam. ii. 12 ; Jer. ix. 3. The heathen had no adequate knowledge of God. They often recognized His power, but they had little idea of His love or His purity ; and many of them, in their ignorance of anything Divine, had lost the sense of the difference between right and wrong, especially as regards charity, purity, and honesty. Cf. Seneca *De Ira* ii. 8 ; *Nec furtiva jam scelera sunt ; praeter oculos eunt. Adeoque in publicum missa nequitia est et in omnium pectoribus evaluit, ut innocentia non rara, sed nulla est.* The whole passage should be read as a description of heathen disregard of moral laws. For other echoes of the O.T. see on ii. 4.

**6. to transgress]** Of the two verbs (ὑπερβαίνειν καὶ πλεονεκτεῖν) it is possible that only the second governs 'his brother,' the first being absolute. But it is also possible that both verbs govern 'his brother,' and that we ought to translate, 'to get the better of and defraud his brother' ; and this makes equally good sense. Nowhere else in the N.T. does ὑπερβαίνειν occur.

**defraud his brother]** Impurity is a wrong to society ; it defiles the sinner and his victim and corrupts the whole community. The offender robs his fellows by a selfish lowering of the moral tone ; 1 Cor. v. 6. In the case of the adulterer the defrauding is at a maximum. In the *Sibylline Oracles* iv. 164 it is probable that ὕβρις is used in this sense. See K. Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul* p. 57.

us in exchange ? Extasy ; the absorption of our own personality in that of the Deity, and a Deity as inaccessible to knowledge as to love.

'His brother' here does not mean 'his fellow-Christian,' but 'his fellow-creature,' 'his neighbour.' The person who was specially wronged might be a heathen.

to gratify his own desire] This is interpretation of the vague expression (ἐν τῷ πράγματι) under which the nauseous meaning is veiled.\* In the matter' (R.V.) means 'in the matter which we are considering,' viz. personal chastity. Cf. 2 Cor. vii. 11. 'In any matter' (A.V.) is wrong; there is no thought here of fraud in business transactions, as is clear from the next verse. The whole section is concerned with impurity, and an abrupt parenthetical allusion to dishonesty and covetousness is improbable. The Vulgate's *in negotio* misled the translators of 1611. The suggestion that for τῷ πράγματι we should read τῷ πράγματι may be dismissed; τῷ = τινι is found nowhere in the N.T., neither here nor 1 Cor. xv. 8.

an avenger of all sins of this kind] Lit. 'an avenger concerning all these things.' Here and in Rom. xii. 19, and perhaps xiii. 4, it is Deut. xxxii. 35 which is in St. Paul's mind; cf. Heb. x. 30; Ps. xciv. 1. He is closer to the Hebrew, 'Vengeance is Mine and recompense,' than to the LXX, 'In a day of vengeance I will recompense.' It is just possible that, as he is quoting the O.T., 'the Lord' here means 'Jehovah.' But almost certainly 'the Lord' has the usual Pauline meaning of 'the Lord Jesus,' to whom God has committed the final judgment; 2 Thess. i. 7-9. St. Paul constantly takes expressions which in the O.T. are used of Jehovah and uses them of Christ, as if the transition was natural and obvious. See on iii. 12; also Hastings' *DAC*. I. p. 188b.

told you beforehand] Or, 'gave you warning'; cf. iii. 3; 2 Cor. xiii. 2; Gal. v. 21.

earnestly protested] A stronger word (διεμαρτυράμεθα) than that used in ii. 12 (μαρτυρόμενοι). Cf. Lk. xvi. 28 and Heb. ii. 6. Elsewhere St. Paul adds 'before God' (ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεοῦ) to 'earnestly protest'; 1 Tim. v. 21; 2 Tim. ii. 14, iv. 1. Both verbs occur in St. Paul's speech

\* *Euphemia est, quod adulterium non appellat apostolus* (Bengel).



before the Sanhedrin, Acts xxiii. 11, and both in the speech at Miletus, xx. 21, 23, 24, 26. In the latter speech Pauline language abounds. See on v. 12.

7. to indulge in] Lit. 'on terms of' (ἐπὶ); cf. Eph. ii. 10; Gal. v. 13. *Non vocavit hac lege ut essemus immundi.*

an unclean life] Or, 'uncleanness.' This shows that in v. 6 there is no reference to dishonesty in business. Here, as in ii. 3, we have a change of preposition; here from 'on terms of,' 'on a basis of' (ἐπὶ) to 'in' (ἐν).

in perfecting holiness] Training in it, as in vv. 3 and 4. The repetition of the term should be noted. We must also remember that St. Paul is writing from Corinth, where sensuality was rampant.

8. It follows from this] Introduces an emphatic conclusion (τοιγαροῦν); cf. Heb. xii. 1.

deliberately ignores] 'Treats as removed from position and practically inoperative' (ἀθετεῖ = 'makes ἄθετον'). Cf. Lk. x. 16 (a Saying which may be in the Apostle's mind; see on i. 5 and ii. 16) and Jn. xii. 48; also Is. xxiv. 16 f.

what we have been saying] The Greek has simply 'deliberately ignores,' and what is ignored has to be understood. Some understand 'God's call to a holy life,' which makes what follows to be an empty truism.

the one God] See on i. 2. The article (τὸν Θεόν) is all the more noticeable because 'a man' (ἄνθρωπον) has no article.

is ever giving] Or possibly, 'is the Giver of' (τὸν δίδοντα like τὸν ρυόμενον in i. 10). 'Hath given' (δόντα) is a wrong reading. In Rom. v. 5; 2 Cor. i. 22, v. 5; Gal. i. 4 the aorist is right. "It is important to notice how central was the belief that Christians were men who were inspired with a Holy Spirit." (K. Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, p. 21). This inspiration transformed their whole life; and it put an end to the pagan plea that man has no power to resist impure desires.

whose special characteristic, etc.] The repetition of the article (τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) gives this effect; 'holiness' is a separate idea added to 'the Spirit.' It looks back to the threefold mention of holiness.

to dwell within you] Lit. 'into you' (εἰς ὑμᾶς), as in ii. 9 ; cf. Heb. viii. 10, 'give My laws into their mind.' The meaning might be 'for your good' ; Eph. iii. 2 ; Col. i. 25. Some texts here have 'us' for 'you' (ἡμᾶς for ὑμᾶς), a frequent confusion in MSS. See Ezek. xxxvii. 14, which seems to have been in the Apostle's mind.

The second half of v. 8 balances, by way of contrast, the second half of v. 6. The Lord is the Avenger of all these gross sins ; but the God who has called us to a life of holiness is the Giver of the Spirit, to enable us to forsake these sins and respond to His call. The way to escape the Avenger is to fly to the Giver and accept and cherish His gift.

9. **There is another subject]** The opening words (περὶ δὲ τῆς κ.τ.λ.) resemble 1 Cor. vii. 25, viii. 1, xii. 1, xvi. 1 in form ; but it is not likely that the Thessalonians had written to the Apostle to ask for advice on this subject. See on iii. 6.

From the grossly selfish sin of impurity the writers pass to the 'love of the brethren' which is such a contrast to it, with regard to which the Thessalonians require, not reformation, but progress. 'Love of the brethren' (φιλαδελφία), as distinct from ἀγάπη (iii. 6, 12, v. 8), which has no limits, means affection for all fellow-Christians (Rom. xii. 10 ; Heb. xiii. 1 ; 1 Pet. i. 22 ; 2 Pet. i. 7 only). The more comprehensive term occurs scores of times in N.T. Chastity and charity are in a special sense Christian virtues, and the inculcation of them had much to do with the success of the Gospel. The experience of the heathen had taught them the value of these lofty virtues, which to them seemed to be almost unattainable.

**you have no need]** To make the construction smoother some copyists substituted 'we have no need.' The statement is made in all sincerity. Though poor, these Macedonians could be very generous (2 Cor. viii. 1-5) ; the recognition of this paves the way for a request for still greater things, as Chrysostom intimates.

The writers are not inciting their converts to acquire a virtue which they do not possess by telling them that they do possess it. Cf. v. 1 ; 2 Cor. ix. 1 ; Philem. 21.

**of your own accord]** Without being exhorted by their teachers. See on iv. 16 for this emphatic use of the pronoun (*αὐτοί*).

**you have accepted God's teaching]** Lit. 'you are God-taught' (*θεοδιδασκτοί ἐστε*), an expression which occurs nowhere else in the N.T. Cf. Jn. vi. 45 ; 1 Cor. ii. 10, 13 ; 1 Jn. ii. 20. The statement does not refer to any specific precept, such as 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' but to the Divine influence on their hearts. Cf. Is. liv. 13 ; Jer. xxxi. 34 ; Mt. xxiii. 8.

**10. the more confidently]** This verse gives an additional reason for the previous statement ; cf. iii. 4 ; 2 Thess. iii. 10 ; 1 Cor. v. 7. They must be God-taught, for they practise the Divine lesson, not merely among themselves, but in the whole of Macedonia, viz. Philippi, Beroea, and other Christian communities not known to us. Their position on the Egnatian Way gave the Thessalonians many opportunities. Like the other two cities, they became a missionary centre.

**to do this still more fully]** Cf. v. 1 and v. 11. The Apostle would say the same thing now. It is the jealousies and enmities between Christians which constitute the chief obstacles to the success of missionary enterprise at home and abroad. "Would it not be higher praise than some of us deserve, to say that we loved with brotherly cordiality all the Christian churches in Britain, and wished them God-speed in their Christian work ? " (Denney, *ad loc.*).

**11. make a vigorous endeavour]** Lit. 'Be anxious of distinction, be ambitious' (*φιλοτιμείσθαι*). In late Greek the verb seems to lose the idea of emulation. The exhortation to make a quiet life an object of endeavour is among the indications that there had been much restlessness among the converts. In Rom. xv. 20 and 2 Cor. v. 9, the only other passages in the N.T. in which the verb occurs, it is used, as here, in a good sense. See Plummer on 2 Cor. v. 9. The paradoxical expression, 'be vigorous in keeping quiet,' is perhaps made deliberately. Cf. "make a desperate effort on behalf of tranquillity of mind" (Arrian, *Disc. of*

*Epictetus*, ii. 16 *sub fin.*) ; also “ with strenuous yielding ” (Clement of Rome, *Cor.* lviii. 2, lxii. 2).

**to keep quiet]** With ἡσυχάζειν here contrast περιεργαζέσθαι 2 Thess. iii. 11.

**to work at some handicraft.]** It is probable that the large majority of the converts worked (ἐργαζέσθαι) with their hands for their living ; 2 Thess. iii. 10–13. These two Epistles contain no exhortations to the wealthy, and no warnings as to the deceitfulness of riches, although there was much wealth in Thessalonica.

**in accordance with the precepts]** This applies mainly to ‘ work at some handicraft,’ as v. 12 shows. The precepts were enforced by example ; 2 Thess. iii. 8–12 ; 1 Cor. ix. 12 ; 2 Cor. vii. 2, xi. 7, 9 ; xii. 13 ; Acts xviii. 3, xx. 34.

**12. so as to be in good report]** Or, ‘ in a comely manner ’ (εὐσχημόνως) ; Rom. xiii. 13 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 40 ; cf. Mk. xv. 43. ‘ Honestly ’ formerly had this meaning.

**your unbelieving neighbours]** Lit. ‘ the outsiders ’ (τοὺς ἕξω) ; 1 Cor. v. 12 ; Col. iv. 5 ; Mk. iv. 11. St. Paul is keenly alert to the wisdom of giving no handle to the heathen ; 1 Cor. xiv. 24 ; Col. iv. 5 ; 1 Tim. iii. 7, vi. 1. That the idlers begged of the heathen is not implied ; but the heathen would see that certain Christians were idlers and sponged upon others, especially upon ‘ the chief women ’ (Acts xvii. 4). The loafer who was willing to live on the bounty of his fellows, and thus brought Christianity into disrepute, was not unknown. Lucian tells how easily simple Christians were taken in by plausible beggars.

**maintain an honourable independence]** Lit. ‘ be in need of nothing,’ or possibly, ‘ be in need of nobody ’ (μηδενός being either neuter or masculine). The meaning is much the same in either case.\* The Gospel bids us to be glad to give where help is required ; but it also bids us to strive not to require help and thus burden others.

\* We are told that μηδενός must be neuter, because “ to stand in need of no man is for man an impossibility.” But to stand in need of nothing is equally an impossibility.



iv. 13-18. CONCERNING THEM THAT FALL ASLEEP  
BEFORE THE ADVENT OF THE LORD

<sup>13</sup> But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. <sup>15</sup> For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive *and* remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we which are alive, *and* remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. <sup>18</sup> Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.

There is little doubt that one cause of the restlessness and idleness of some of the converts at Thessalonica was the belief that the Lord's Return was imminent, a belief which at several periods in the history of the Church has had an unsettling effect on men's minds. Hence the transition from the declaration of the necessity of living quietly and working steadily to the subject of the Advent. With regard to this subject two points are expounded, viz. the lot of those who are dying before the Advent, and the time at which the Advent may be expected. It is possible that St. Paul, during the few months that he preached at Thessalonica, was so full of the expectation that Christ would come again soon, and had so many other things to teach, that he said little about resurrection. It is probable that some deaths had taken place since the departure of the missionaries, and that in this way discussion and unsettlement had arisen. Possibly some converts had been killed in the persecution. Had these Christians, by their premature deaths, lost all hope of sharing in the glories of the Return and of entering the Kingdom ? The dominant note in this Epistle is not faith, as in some of the later Epistles, but hope,—hope in a bright and glorious future, which may be very near at hand. The fate of those who had lived under

the miseries of persecution, and had died before this future was revealed, seemed to be most pitiable. What was the solution of this problem?

Salmon (*Introd. to N.T.*, p. 385) points out that the problem is evidence of the early date of the Epistle. Only at the very beginning of Christianity, when but few Christians had died, could this anxiety about their condition have arisen. Paley (*Horae Paulinae*) uses a similar argument. Mystery-religions and some philosophies offered immortality, but immortality through the death and destruction of the body. Many of the first Christians, and especially Gentile Christians, hoped to have immortality without dying. To such persons every death of a Christian, as it occurred, was a cause of perplexity and distress. See K. Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, p. 92; Hastings' *DAC.* art. 'Eschatology,' p. 362.

There is nothing here to show that the Thessalonians had written to the Apostle, as the Corinthians did (1 Cor. vii. 1), asking for a solution of questions which disturbed them. More probably Timothy had told Paul and Silvanus that these two questions about the Advent were causing unhealthy agitation.

<sup>13</sup> Now there is a matter, Brethren, about which we do not wish you to remain uninformed; I mean about those among you who are falling asleep before the Coming of the Lord; for we desire to save you from sorrowing in the way that the rest of the world cannot fail to sorrow, because they have no share in our Christian hope. <sup>14</sup> Our hope saves us from such sorrow, for, if we really do believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we are quite sure that God will cause those who by the hands of Jesus have been laid to sleep to be brought again with Him. <sup>15</sup> We are quite sure of it, for this we say to you on the authority of the Lord, that we who are alive, who survive the Coming of the Lord, will assuredly have no advantage in time over those who have fallen asleep before the Coming. <sup>16</sup> We cannot do so, because the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a commanding summons, namely, with an archangel's cry, with a trumpet of God; and all who have died and are now in Christ will at once rise again. <sup>17</sup> Then, and not till then, we who are alive and survive shall, one and all, with them be caught up in clouds, for a meeting with the Lord, into the air; and thus for evermore with the Lord shall we be. <sup>18</sup> Where-

fore, in times of doubt and depression, comfort one another by repeating these words.

**13. We do not wish you to remain uninformed]** This is a mode of expression which St. Paul frequently uses in his earlier letters, especially when he wants to correct an erroneous idea, or to explain what has caused perplexity ; Rom. i. 13, xi. 25 ; 1 Cor. x. i, xii. 1 ; 2 Cor. i. 8 ; cf. 1 Cor. xii. 3 ; Phil. i. 12 ; Col. ii. 1. Similar expressions are found in secular letters preserved in papyri ; “ I wish you to know ” (*γινώσκειν σε θέλω*), like our “ I beg to inform you.”

**Brethren]** As usual, St. Paul adds this affectionate address to a form of expression which otherwise might seem to be dictatorial or imply reprehensible ignorance in those to whom he writes. See on i. 4.

**who are falling asleep]** The present participle (*κοιμωμένων*) is the right reading) indicates a process which is going on. The metaphor or euphemism is not of Christian origin, nor was it suggested by the hope of a resurrection ; but it was probably adopted by Christian writers as harmonizing with that hope, and as having been employed by Christ Himself ; Mk. v. 39 ; Mt. ix. 24 ; Lk. viii. 52 ; Jn. xi. 11. It is remarkable that, while St. Paul uses ‘ falling asleep ’ of Christians, whose resurrection lies in the future, he uses ‘ die ’ of Christ (iv. 14, v. 10 ; etc.), whose resurrection is a certain fact. The metaphor as used in Scripture cannot safely be used in theological discussion as throwing light on the doctrine of an intermediate state. Cf. Hom. *Il.* xi. 241 ; Virg. *Aen.* vi. 278, x. 745 ; Hor. *Od.* I. xxiv. 5. Probably not many had died at Thessalonica in the short period since their conversion, but enough to raise the question and make many of the survivors anxious. They had been baptized in the full expectation of living until the Lord returned to admit them into His Kingdom. What would be the lot of those who had failed to live long enough for this ?

**from sorrowing in the way that the rest of the world, etc.]** Such is probably the way in which St. Paul would have explained the language which he uses, had he been asked

whether all sorrowing for the death of those who are dear to us is wrong. The Greek, if treated with exactness, implies that the Thessalonians are not to sorrow at all for their dead ; and the exact meaning may stand. They are not to mourn for the dead, but they may mourn for themselves ; cf. Lk. xxiii. 28. The dead are with Christ, which is far better than being with earthly friends, and it is wrong to bemoan them as if they had lost much and gained little or nothing. This was what the large majority of heathen and of Jews did ; they had miserable ideas about life after death, if they believed in it at all. But to sorrow for what we have lost through the death of those whom we love is natural, and this is not forbidden. As Augustine remarks (*Ep.* cclxiii. 3) : “ The Apostle Paul did not prohibit sorrow altogether, but only such sorrow as the heathen manifest who have no hope ” ; and Bengel remarks that it is a special note of the power of Christianity *quod ea desiderium mortuorum non tollit aut exacerbat, sed suaviter temperat.*

**the rest of the world]** This refers chiefly, if not exclusively, to ‘ the heathen who have no knowledge of God,’ the unbelieving neighbours of the converts. See on *vv.* 5 and 12 and cf. Rom. xi. 7 ; Eph. i. 18, iv. 4 ; Col. i. 23. The Apostle is not thinking of Sadducees.

**have no share in our hope]** It is not clear whether hope of resurrection or hope of life in Christ is meant. In 1 Cor. xv. 32 St. Paul points out the inevitable moral result of denying a future life ; ‘ Let us eat and drink etc.’ Cf. Is. lvi. 12 ; Eccles. ii. 24, iii. 12, v. 18, ix. 7 ; and especially Wisd. ii 6–9. It is therefore not surprising to find similar views in heathen writers ; Hdt. ii. 78 ; Thuc. ii. 53 ; Eur. *Alc.* 788 f., *Iph. Aul.* 1252 ; Hor. *Od.* II. iii. 13 ; Petron. *Satyr.* 34. Numerous passages are quoted to show that the general view of the heathen respecting the dead was one of despair ; Plato, *Phaedr.* 64 ; Theocr. iv. 42 ; Lucret. iii. 942 ; Catul. v. 4.\* It is said that at Thessalonica a sepulchral inscription

\* See Driver on Deut. xiv. 1, 2 respecting heathen methods of mourning for the dead which were forbidden for the Chosen People.



“told the bystander that after death there is no revival, after the grave no meeting of those who have loved each other on earth” (Conybeare and Howson, ch. ix.). The hope of seeing one another again in the other world was cherished only by those few heathen who believed in the immortality of the soul. The fact that a plant or tree cut down may sprout again with greater vigour, whereas men when cut down cannot do so, seemed to the heathen to intimate the inferiority of man to vegetation. Jews sometimes had the same thought; Job xiv. 7-10. To the Christian this sprouting seemed to be an intimation of resurrection. The contrast has often been pointed out between the gloomy despondency of the heathen inscriptions on the magnificent tombs along the Appian Way, and the triumphant hopefulness of the Christian inscriptions on the humble graves in the catacombs below the same soil. “This is a more striking illustration than any quotations from literature” (Lightfoot *ad loc.*).

Nevertheless, it is right to remind ourselves of heathen utterances of a different tenor. There are the well-known passages in Plato: *Apol.* 41, *Meno* 81, *Phaedo* 70, 72, 91, *Rep.* x. 608-612, *Sym.* 208, *Laws* xii. 958. See also Cicero, Book I. of the *Tusculan Disputations*; Seneca, *Consolatio ad Polybium* xxviii. 5, *Consolatio ad Marciam*, xix. 5, *Epp.* xxvi. 9, lvii. 56, cii. 23-30. Even Ovid (*Met.* xv. 153-9) can write thus of death:—

*O genus attonitum gelidae formidine mortis,  
Quid Styga, quid tenebras, quid nomina vana timetis,  
Materiem vatum, falsique piacula mundi?  
Corpora sive rogos flamma, seu tabe vetustas  
Abstulerit, mala posse pati non ulla putetis.  
Morte carent animae: semperque priore relictæ  
Sede novis domibus habitant, vivuntque receptæ.*

The last two lines are specially impressive;—

Souls have no share in death: when their earlier haunt is abandoned, They dwell in their new abodes, and live on in the home that receives them.

We have a homily of Chrysostom on this verse and two sermons of Augustine.

14. **if we really do believe]** The implication is that of course we do believe this ; cf. 1 Cor. xv. 12, 21 ; Gal. iii. 29. The writers make this quite clear by the form of the apodosis, which runs, not 'we ought to believe also,' but 'so also God will, etc.' There is no uncertainty, either about our belief that Jesus has been raised, or about our being raised in due time. Why not about the latter ? Because of the reality of the union between Christ and the members of His mystical Body. Death does not sever them from Him ; and it is incredible that He should die and be raised again, but that they should die and never be raised. Here, as elsewhere in St. Paul, the death and resurrection of Christ are regarded as inseparable. Even where only one is mentioned, the other is implied. The two facts are the foundation of the Christian faith.

those who by the hands of Jesus have been laid to sleep] Lit. 'those who fell asleep through Jesus' (τοὺς κοιμηθέντας διὰ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ) This use of 'through' (διὰ cum gen.) is difficult, and the exact meaning is uncertain. We should expect 'in Christ' (ἐν Χριστῷ), as in v. 16 and 1 Cor. xv. 18. 'To be raised through Christ' and 'to live through Christ' would be intelligible enough. Moreover the passage from sleep to awakening might give us the idea of 'through.' But that is not what we have here. 'Who fell asleep through Jesus' may possibly mean that it was through Him that they passed away peacefully. In that case we are close to the idea that they were 'laid to sleep by Him.' This is rendered all the more possible because the participle (κοιμηθέντας) may be passive in meaning as well as in form. See Moulton, *Prolegomena*, p. 162 ; A.T. Robertson, *Gr. of Grk. N.T.* p. 817. But if we are right in conjecturing that ii. 15 implies that some Thessalonians had been put to death in the persecution, then 'who fell asleep through Jesus' might have a similar meaning. K. Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, p. 88. For a somewhat similar question see 2 Esdr. v. 41, 42.

Some translators transfer the puzzling words 'through Jesus' from 'fell asleep' to 'bring'; 'so also we may be sure that by means of Jesus God will bring with Him those who are asleep.' But this loses the impressive contrast between 'Jesus died' and 'those who fell asleep through Jesus.' With this use of *διά* cf. Rom. i. 8, 12; 2 Cor. i. 5.

to be brought again with Him] This must come at the end of the sentence, as in the Greek. The verb 'bring' or 'lead' (*ἄγειν*) implies that they are *alive*; 2 Tim. iv. 11; Acts xvii. 15, 19, etc. If they are alive, they must have been raised; and they are 'with' Christ, because they have never been severed from Him.

15. For this we say] 'This' refers to what follows, not to what precedes. The last chapter of the Didaché resembles vv. 15-17.

on the authority of the Lord] Lit. 'in the word of the Lord' (*ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου*), *i.e.* in the power of a word spoken by the Lord (1 Kings xiii. 17, 18, xx. 35). Cf. 'Then came the word of the Lord (*λόγος κυρίου*) to Isaiah,' Is. xxxviii. 4. The reference may be to a Saying of Christ not preserved in the Gospels, like the one in Acts xx. 35, or to a direct revelation made to one or more of the writers of the letter, such as those recorded Acts xvi. 6, 7, 9, xviii. 9, xx. 23, xxi. 11, xxii. 17, xxvii. 23; 2 Cor. xii. 1; Gal. i. 12, ii. 2. The former is perhaps rather more probable; if so, the case is similar to Rom. xiv. 14 and 1 Cor. ix. 14, where there may be allusion to words spoken by Christ. Neither 'in the word of the Lord' here, nor 'I received from the Lord' in 1 Cor. xi. 23, necessarily implies a direct revelation. Some regard it as an appeal to the Saying which is recorded Mt. xxiv. 31; which can hardly be correct, for that passage says nothing about the point which is in question here, *viz.* the future in store for those who die before the Advent. In 2 Esdras xiii. 24 a blessing is promised to those who are *alive* at the Coming of the Messiah. But in any case the writers here claim Divine inspiration. What they say they say 'on the authority of the Lord.' See Zahn, *Introd.* to *N.T.*, II. p. 382.

**we who are alive.]** The Apostle naturally identifies himself with the living, who may hope to survive until the Coming. Equally naturally this hope became less strong as years passed and death became nearer. He nowhere asserts that he will live to see the Return, though he believes that he may do so. See on the one hand Rom. xiii. 11, 12 ; 1 Cor. vii. 29-31 ; Phil. iv. 5 ; and on the other 2 Cor. v. 1-10 ; Phil. i. 23, iii. 11, 20, 21. Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 379. It is worth noting that we have here incidental evidence of the authenticity of the letter. A forger writing after the Apostle's death would not have attributed such words as ' we who are alive ' to him.

**will assuredly have no advantage in time]** Or, ' certainly will not forestall.' We have here the strongest form of the Greek negative (*οὐ μὴ*), and the verb (*φθάσωμεν*) is the same as that which is used in ii. 16 of the wrath of God overtaking the ungodly more speedily than they anticipated. The Thessalonians feared that only the living would share in the glory and joy of the Return. They are assured that the living will not even be the first to share in it ; it is the dead in Christ who will have that advantage. They will be already with the Lord when He returns. Cf. Wisd. vi. 14, xvi. 28 for the use of *φθάνειν* with the accusative ; and v. 3 ; 1 Cor. viii. 13 ; Gal. v. 16 for the double negative.

**those who have fallen asleep]** Or, ' have been laid to sleep.' The writers harp on this expression, which occurs three times in three verses. Those who have passed away are not really dead ; they are only asleep. The verse gives the impression that those who are alive are a minority ; they have to wait.

**16. the Lord Himself]** He will not send any agent or representative ; He will come in person (*αὐτός*), and He knows all that are His. This emphatic pronoun is frequent in the letter ; i. 9, ii. 1, iii. 3, 11, iv. 9, 23. For the personal reappearance of Christ to judge the world cf. 2 Thess. i. 10 ; Acts i. 11 ; Mk. xiv. 62 ; Rev. i. 7. The picturesque details belong to Jewish apocalyptic ideas ; Exod. xix. 11, 16 ;



Deut. xxxiii. 2 ; Is. xxvii. 13 ; Joel ii. 1 ; Mic. i. 3, 4 ; 2 Esdr. vi. 23 ; etc. We may regard them as being probably symbolical. " There are problems suggested by this primitive Christian eschatology. It is always difficult to say how much of it is figurative. It is quite certain that there is a considerable amount which was never intended to be more than symbolical. The eschatology of the N.T. puts before us certain great truths—resurrection, the recompense of good and evil, the final triumph of Divine justice. All these it teaches in the language of symbolism. That symbolic language has become the inheritance of the Christian Church" (Headlam, *St. Paul and Christianity*, pp. 33-35).

See Hastings' *DCG*. II. p. 766.

**a commanding summons]** The word (*κέλευσμα*) occurs nowhere else in the N.T. It means a shout to command, or summon, or encourage others. Here we may understand a loud summons to all, whether awake or asleep, to come and meet the Lord ; cf. Mt. xxv. 6, 31. It is uttered, not by the Lord Himself, but by the attendant archangel.\* ' Angels ' and ' voices ' and ' trumpets ' are frequent in the Apocalypse.

St. Paul, like our Lord, makes use of the imagery which was current in his day, and we must not quote him as an authority for a literal interpretation of such language. Without imagery of some kind ideas such as these cannot be made intelligible to either teacher or taught. The Apostle's aim is to calm and comfort the Thessalonians, not to propound a doctrine of the Last Things. The fact that he says ' an archangel's cry ' (*φωνῇ ἀρχαγγέλου*) and not ' the cry of the archangel ' (*τῇ φωνῇ τοῦ ἀρχαγγέλου*) is some slight indication that he regards the language as symbolical ; but we cannot insist upon this. The cry and the trumpet explain the way in which the commanding summons was given. ' Archangel ' occurs again Jude 9 of Michael ; 2 Esdr. iv. 36 of Uriel.†

\* It is a strange idea of B. Weiss that *κέλευσμα* here means " the word of command which authorizes Christ to return," and that it " proceeds from God."

† Among curiosities of interpretation is the suggestion that

**with . . . with . . . with]** The preposition (*ἐν*) marks the attendant circumstances *in* which the descent takes place ; it will be accompanied by these sounds. Or we might say ‘ at ’ or ‘ at the time of,’ as in 1 Cor. xv. 52, ‘ at the Last trump ’ (*ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ σάλπιγγι*).

**a trumpet of God]** Cf. Exod. xix. 16 ; Ps. xlvii. 6 ; Zech. ix. 14 ; Is. xxvii. 13 ; and esp. 2 Esdr. vi. 23. We have ‘ harps of God ’ (*κιθάρας τοῦ Θεοῦ*), Rev. xv. 2 ; also ‘ musical instruments of God,’ 1 Chron. xvi. 42. Instruments used in God’s service is the meaning in each case.

**died and are now in Christ]** While dead to us, they are still in the care of the risen and glorified Christ. “ Whence did St. Paul derive this conception ? It is quite as mystical as anything which meets us in the writings of St. John ; it has no parallel in the O.T. or in secular literature ” (Knowling, *The Testimony of St. Paul to Christ*, p. 232). Cf. 2 Thess. i. 12 ; Jn. xvii. 1, 10, 21–26 ; and see on v. 18. The phrase does not mean ‘ those who died in Christ,’ *i.e.* believing in Him, which is the meaning in 1 Cor. xv. 18 and Rev. xiv. 13.

**shall at once rise again]** Lit. ‘ shall rise *first* ’ ; but this translation gives a wrong impression, as appearing to mean that others will rise later. The ‘ first ’ means ‘ before the Christians who are alive are caught up into the air.’ Rev. xx. 5 is not here in point. Like Christ Himself at His Resurrection, they will rise to heavenly life.

**17. Then, and not till then]** Cf. Gal. i. 18 ; in both places the ‘ then ’ (*ἔπειτα*) is very emphatic. Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 28 (*τότε*).

**one and all, with them]** We have the same combination (*ἅμα σὺν*) v. 10 ; but *ἅμα* is to be taken separately, ‘ all together,’ ‘ one and all ’ ; cf. Rom. iii. 12. It is needless to discuss whether the expression is temporal or local, ‘ together with them in time ’ or ‘ together with them in space.’ Both make good sense, and both may be meant.\* There is a blessed reunion.

‘ archangel ’ here means the Holy Spirit. In this way we get an allusion to the Trinity ; the Son summons, the Spirit cries, the Father’s trumpet sounds !

\* Ellicott insists on the temporal meaning as the usual meaning of

**be caught up]** Like the Apostle into the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 4 ; cf. Acts viii. 39 ; Rev. xii. 5. There is no parallel to this rapture in Jewish literature of similar date. Thackeray, *The Relation of St. Paul to Contemporary Jewish Thought*, pp. 107-112 ; Charles, *Enc. Bibl.* II. 1382.

**in clouds]** As a chariot ; Acts i. 9, 11 ; Rev. xi. 12 ; Ps. civ. 3 ; 2 Kings ii. 11. Cf. Mt. xxiv. 30, ' on the clouds ' (ἐπὶ).

**for a meeting with the Lord]** The expression (εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου) suggests a ceremonial meeting with a person of position ; Mt. xxv. 6 ; Acts xxviii. 15 ; cf. Jn. xii. 13 (εἰς ὑπάντησιν αὐτῷ).

It is possible that St. Paul knew the Parable of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins, and that he here has it in mind. But this is the only point of resemblance ; the rest of the imagery is quite different. The phrase is frequent in the LXX.

**into the air]** To be taken with ' caught up in clouds.' The important purpose of the rapture, viz. to meet the Lord, is placed between the two expressions. ' Into the air ' is an explanatory afterthought added in dictating. It shows that these saints have been freed from their terrestrial bodies, and have, like the Risen Lord Himself, a transformed body. The ' air ' (ἀήρ) is the atmosphere near the earth, as distinct from the ' heaven ' (οὐρανός) whence the Lord descends ; cf. 1 Cor. xiv. 9 ; Acts xxii. 23 ; Rev. xvi. 17 ; *Slavonic Enoch* iii. 1. Their being caught up into the air is against the idea that the Lord is coming down to the earth. They have been raised for life in heaven (2 Cor. v. 1), and He has come down from heaven to fetch them. As Augustine points out (*De Civ. Dei*, XX. xx. 2), we are not to suppose that they remain in the air.

**and thus]** The natural consequence of this blissful meeting with the Lord is that there will be no subsequent parting. Nothing is said about their abiding with Him *on the earth*. Place is not mentioned ; the only thing that matters is the company,—' with the Lord.' Nowhere in the Pauline Epp.

ἀμα : ' We shall be caught up with them at the same time that they shall be caught up.'

is there any clear intimation of a reign of Christ on earth ; cf. 2 Cor. v. 1 ; 2 Tim. iv. 18. Hastings' *DB.* I. p. 756.

**for evermore]** ' At all times ' (πάντοτε), as in i. 2, ii. 16, iii. 6, v. 15, 16. It is stronger than ' always ' (ἀεί), which St. Paul rarely uses.

**with the Lord]** We have σύν here and v. 10, which commonly expresses closer union than μετά (iii. 13 ; 2 Thess. i. 7). But the distinction is often ignored in N.T. This thought was often in the Apostle's mind ; v. 10 ; 2 Thess. ii. 1 ; 2 Cor. v. 8 ; Phil. i. 23. But when Philip-pians was written his way of looking at this truth had changed. Instead of looking for Christ to come down to him he is longing to depart and be with Christ.

**shall we be]** This closes the momentous statement ; and ' we ' covers both those that have been raised and the living.

St. Paul tells the Thessalonians no more than is necessary to quiet their anxieties about the Christians who have already passed away. Nothing is said about the resurrection of the wicked or of the heathen ; nothing about the intermediate state ; nothing about the judgment of quick and dead ; nothing about the change from ' natural ' bodies to ' spiritual ' bodies ; nothing about the life after the Return, except that there will be uninterrupted union with the Lord. It may be said of Scripture generally that our natural curiosity about the other world is not gratified. Just the minimum that is necessary to enable us to shape our lives aright, and to cherish hope for ourselves and others, is told us, but very little more than that. The inference is that it would do us no good, and might do us harm, to know more.\*

\* Mr. A. S. Way in his valuable translation of *The Letters of St. Paul* (2nd ed., 1906, p. 11) prints this passage, ' The Lord Himself . . . shall we be,' in poetical form, and calls it " Hymn of the Second Coming." He perhaps does not mean that the Apostle is here quoting an early Christian hymn, as may well be the case in 1 Tim. iii. 16 and 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12. He treats v. 2, 3 in a similar manner, calling it " Hymn of the Day of the Lord " ; and also v. 5b-10, calling it " Hymn of the Watchers." What is true of all three passages is probably this :—that the Apostle's glowing thought here finds utterance in frequent antitheses which have some resem-



18. **Wherefore]** Or, 'So then' (ὥστε), as the result of what has just been stated. So far from sorrowing, there should be much comfort; and this is the main purpose of the whole section; v. 13.

**comfort one another]** Or, 'encourage one another.' This rather than 'exhort' is here the meaning of the verb (παράκαλεῖτε); cf. ii. 11, iii. 2, iv. 1, 10, v. 11, 14.

**by repeating these words]** Lit. 'in these words,' 'by means of these words,' viz. by quoting what the Lord has made known. This would be done in private intercourse and in the public services of the Church. There could be no stronger or more convincing authority than a word of the Lord. The small amount of consolation which heathen were able to offer is shown by papyri. Deissmann, *New Light on the N.T.* p. 76, gives a characteristic letter of consolation. "Eirene to Taonnophris and Philon, good cheer! I was as much grieved and shed as many tears over Eumoiros as I shed for Didymas, and I did everything that is fitting, and so did my whole family. But still there is nothing one can do in the face of such trouble. So I leave you to comfort yourselves. Good-bye." Servius Sulpicius offers consolation to Cicero for the death of his beloved daughter Tullia in these terms: "I received the news of your daughter's death with all the concern which it so justly deserves. Had I been near you when this fatal event happened, I should not only have mingled my tears with yours, but assisted you with all the consolation in my power. I am sensible, at the same time, that offices of this kind afford at best but a miserable relief. Nevertheless, I thought that I might suggest a few reflexions, not of course new to you, but possibly overlooked in your present distress of mind. You must often, in these wretched times, have reflected that the lot of those whom death has gently removed

blance to Hebrew poetry, and in rhythms and cadences which are specially pleasing to mind and ear. Cf. 1 Cor. xiii., esp. vv. 4-10, xv. 42b-57, and Rom. viii. 31-39. See Moffatt, *Intr. to the Literature of the N.T.*, pp. 57, 58; Ramsay, *The First Christian Century*, pp. 105-107; Swete, *The Life of the World to Come*, pp. 28, 33, 112,

from this unhappy scene is by no means to be regretted. What is there in the present state of our country which could have made life desirable to your daughter? Remember the numbers of our illustrious countrymen who have been suddenly cut off (in the civil wars), how the Roman Republic has been weakened, and how its provinces have been devastated. Can you, with these greater calamities in your mind, be so immoderately afflicted for the loss of a single individual, a poor little tender woman, who, if she had not died now, must in a few fleeting years have submitted to the common fate to which she was born?"

#### V. I-II. THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE TIME OF THE ADVENT AND THE NEED OF WATCHFULNESS

v. <sup>1</sup> But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. <sup>2</sup> For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. <sup>3</sup> For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. <sup>4</sup> But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. <sup>5</sup> Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. <sup>6</sup> Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. <sup>7</sup> For they that sleep, sleep in the night, and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. <sup>8</sup> But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> For God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. <sup>11</sup> Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

The condition of Christians who die before the Advent was not the only question which Timothy found to be causing unsettlement among the Thessalonian converts. Like the four disciples on the Mount of Olives, many of them wanted to know 'when shall these things be' (Mk. xiii. 3, 4). The Apostle and his colleagues had already given them what was virtually the Lord's answer to a similar question; 'It is not for you to know times and seasons which the Father hath set within His own authority' (Acts i. 7). But this

had not satisfied them ; and St. Paul once more appeals to what they already know. The Day of the Lord will come without previous sign, and the wise Christian must be always ready ; he must wait patiently, work, and watch.\*

<sup>1</sup> Now, as to the times and the circumstances of the Lord's Coming, Brethren, you have no need for anything further to be written to you. <sup>2</sup> For you yourselves know accurately from what we have already taught you, that the time of the Coming of the day of the Lord is just as uncertain as the coming of a *thief* in the night. <sup>3</sup> It is just when men are saying, " We may feel secure ; we are perfectly safe," then in an instant destruction comes upon them, just as travail-pangs upon a woman with child, and there is no possibility of escape. <sup>4</sup> But *you*, Brethren, are not living in darkness, so as to let the Day overtake *you*, as daylight overtakes thieves. <sup>5</sup> For *all* of you are sons of light and are sons of day. We Christians have nothing to do with night, nor yet with darkness ; <sup>6</sup> surely, therefore, we ought not to slumber, as the rest of the world do, but to be awake and be sober. <sup>7</sup> For those who slumber, slumber at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night. <sup>8</sup> But, seeing that we are of the day, let *us* be sober, as is only right for men who have just put on faith and love, as a breastplate for our hearts ; and as a helmet for our heads, hope of salvation. <sup>9</sup> And ours is a sure hope, because God did not appoint us to be visited with His wrath, but to secure for ourselves salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>10</sup> who died for us, in order that, whether awake in life or slumbering in death at the time of His Coming, one and all with Him we should live. <sup>11</sup> Accordingly, as we said before, comfort one another, and build up each the other, as indeed you really are doing.

I. as to the times and the circumstances] The latter word (*καιροί*) is often translated ' seasons,' but it has no exact equivalent in English. The former word (*χρόνοι*) refers to the date, the latter to the occurrences which will distinguish the event as something impossible to mistake. Cf. Dan. ii. 21 and Acts i. 7 for the plurals, without articles. The Vulgate in rendering *καιροί* varies between *actates*, *saccula*, and *momenta* ; the last is best, but Latin has no exact equivalent, as Augustine remarks. See Trench, *Syn.* § lvii. In modern Greek *χρόνος* is a ' year ' and *καιρός* is ' weather.' The plurals do not imply considerable

\* See Warfield on the Prophecies of St. Paul, *Expositor*, 3rd Series, IV, pp. 35, 36, 450.

length of time ; in Greek, as in English, the phrase is a set formula.

**Brethren, you have no need]** See on i. 4 and iv. 9. In 2 Thess. ii. 2 this question is again raised, as if by that time need had arisen.

**2. For you yourselves know]** See on ii. 1.

**accurately]** 'Perfectly' is not the exact meaning. The Thessalonians wanted to know precisely (*ἀκριβῶς*) the date and signs of the Coming. They are reminded that they have already been taught 'precisely' all that it concerns them to know, indeed all that the Lord has revealed ; viz. that the Return will come suddenly to all, but that believers who are watchful will not be taken by surprise. Christ's warnings that God has not allowed exact knowledge as to the time have never sufficed to prevent curiosity as to this subject ; Mk. xiii. 32 ; Mt. xxiv. 36 ; Acts i. 7. Jewish apocalyptical writers tried to extract from Jeremiah and Daniel a great deal more than can be found in those books, and Christians have done the same with the Apocalypse. With such imaginations and conjectures St. Paul has no sympathy ; but this passage and i. 10, together with much of 2 Thessalonians, shows that St. Paul must have said a good deal about the Return and the Judgment in his preaching.

**the Day of the Lord]** A proverbial expression which passed over from the O.T. to the N.T. with some change of meaning. It has become a proper name, and in the true text here has no article (*ἡμέρα Κυρίου*). In the Prophets it is very frequent to denote any time when Jehovah inflicts signal vengeance on His enemies, and hence comes to mean 'the great and terrible day' of final judgment ; Amos v. 18 ; Is. ii. 12, xiii. 6 ; Jer. xlv. 10 ; Ezek. xiii. 5, xxx. 3 ; Joel i. 15, ii. 31, iii. 14 ; etc. In the N.T. it means the Day of the Lord's Return as Judge ; 1 Cor. i. 8, v. 5 ; 2 Cor. i. 14 ; cf. Lk. xvii. 30. Hence it was called simply 'that Day' (2 Thess. i. 10), or 'the Day' (Rom. xiii. 12). See below on v. 4. We have here another instance of the easy way in which what in the O.T. is said of Jehovah is



transferred in the N.T. to Christ. See Knowling, *The Witness of the Epistles*, pp. 266, 404, and *DAC.* art. 'Day and Night.'

**just as . . . as]** We have the same expression of exact similarity (ὡς . . . οὕτως) ii. 7, 8 and 1 Cor. vii. 17. The coming of the Day is treated as a certainty, and hence the present tense (ἔρχεται). Cf. 1 Jn. ii. 18, iv. 3.

**a thief in the night]** Almost certainly a reference to the Saying which is recorded Mt. xxiv. 43 and Lk. xii. 39, and which is reproduced 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. iii. 3, xvi. 15. See the Introduction V, p. xxiv., "Reminiscences of Sayings of Christ." The addition 'in the night' is made with a view to what follows. It may have come from the prevalent Jewish idea that the Messiah would come at midnight; and it helped to produce the primitive belief that the Lord would return in the night, and probably on Easter Eve. It is possible that the saying was influenced by the Law about the House-breaker (Exod. xxii. 2, 3), according to which vital difference was made when the thief came in the night. Abbott, *The Proclamation of the New Kingdom*, p. 466.

'As a *thief*' points to the unexpectedness of the great event: 'thief' is emphatic. What may happen at any time at last comes to be regarded as not coming now.

**3. just when . . . then]** See 1 Cor. xv. 24, where the same expression (ὅταν with the pres. subj. and combined with τότε) is used. It indicates coincidence in time.

**men are saying, We may feel secure]** Here also words of Christ may be in the Apostle's mind; Mt. xxiv. 37, 48; Lk. xvii. 26-36. But cf. Deut. xxix. 19; Jer. vi. 14, vii. 10; Ezek. xiii. 10, to which allusion may be made.

**in an instant]** Emphatic. Cf. Lk. xxi. 34, the only other passage in the N.T. in which the word (αἰφνίδιος) occurs. There the simile is 'as a snare' (ὡς παγίς) or 'a trap.' Cf. Wisd. xvii. 15; 2 Macc. xiv. 17. This close agreement between St. Paul and St. Luke is notable.

**destruction]** Cf. 2 Thess. i. 9; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Tim. vi. 9, where this word (ὀλεθρος) is combined with 'perdition' (ἀπώλεια). The exact meaning is uncertain. The order

of the Greek is perhaps worth keeping ; ‘ there comes on them destruction.’

**comes upon them]** The verb (ἐφίσταται) is often used of comings that are a surprise, and it is a favourite with St. Luke (Lk. ii. 9, xxiv. 4 ; Acts iv. 1, xii. 7, etc). See Zahn, *Introd. to N.T.* p. 224.

**just as travail-pangs]** This is possibly another reminiscence of a Saying of the Lord ; Mk. xiii. 8 ; Mt. xxiv. 8. But more probably it comes from the O.T., in which words which resemble this passage far more closely are frequent ; Ps. xlviii. 6 ; Jer. iv. 31, vi. 24 ; Hos. xiii. 13 ; Mic. iv. 9. See especially Is. xiii. 8, 9.\* The verse is so unlike St. Paul’s style, that it is probably either a quotation or an echo of some writing or saying. To the ideas of certainty as to event and of uncertainty as to time (v. 2) it adds the ideas of pain and of impossibility of escape. Cf. Job. xi. 20 ; Prov. xix. 5 ; Jer. xi. 11.

Jowett (*ad loc.* p. 97) remarks : “ In different passages of Scripture, and even in the same passage, the coming of the Kingdom of God is described to us under contradictory aspects. It is near, it is not near ; visible and invisible ; marked by signs, and yet discernible to God only. It is in the clouds of heaven and in the human soul at once. And everywhere the thoughts are drawn off from the over-curious consideration of its form and manner to the practical lesson which may be gathered from it.”

**there is no possibility]** As in iv. 15, we have the strongest form of the negative (οὐ μή), which occurs only four times in the Pauline Epistles. See p. 74.

**4. But you, Brethren]** The ‘ you ’ is in emphatic contrast to the presumptuous sceptics just mentioned. This passage, when compared with Rom. xiii. 11–14, has enough similarity to show that both are Pauline, and enough difference to show that neither is copied from the other. Cf. Eph. iv. 20, where we have a similar construction.

**in darkness]** In which one may be surprised and over-

\* That, omitting the vowel points, the same Hebrew word might mean either ‘ snare ’ or ‘ travail ’ is not here of much moment.

whelmed, even if one has not fallen asleep. Spiritual darkness is meant ; Jn. iii. 19, xii. 35 ; Rom. ii. 19, xiii. 12 ; 1 Jn. i. 6. The Christian is in the light of knowledge and the light of a holy life. His whole being is full of light ; Lk. xi. 34. The metaphor is frequent in all moral and religious literature. See Hastings' *Enc. of Religion and Ethics*, viii., art. 'Light and Darkness.'

the Day] A.V. and R.V. have 'that Day,' without authority. As in 1 Cor. iii. 13 and Heb. x. 25, we have ἡ ἡμέρα without ἐκεῖνη (2 Tim. i. 12, 18, iv. 8). 'The Day' suffices.

overtake you] 'You' is again emphatic : 'you are morally alert.' Jn. xii. 35.

as daylight overtakes thieves] The majority of authorities read 'as a thief,' but some important witnesses have 'as thieves,' i.e. as thieves are surprised when day dawns and they are caught in the act. In ii. 7 we had a sudden inversion of metaphor from 'children' to 'mother' ; and it is possible that here we have a similar change from being surprised as by a thief to being surprised as thieves are. No copyist would deliberately change 'as a thief' to 'as thieves' (ὡς κλέπτῃς to ὡς κλέπτας), whereas the converse change would be natural. But the reading 'thieves' might be an accidental slip, caused by the preceding 'you' (ὅμᾱς ὡς κλέπτας). Lightfoot has a good parallel from Euripides, *Iph. Taur.* 1025, 6.

5. For all of you] This is a twofold advance on v. 4 ; 'all of you' is more than 'you,' and 'sons of light' is more than 'not in darkness.'

sons of light] The absence of the article (υἱοὶ φωτός makes a reference to the Saying recorded in Lk. xvi. 8 (τοὺς υἱοὺς τοῦ φωτός) precarious. A reference to Christ as the Light is more probable ; Jn. xii. 36 (πιστεύετε εἰς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα υἱοὶ φωτὸς γένησθε). But the metaphor being so common, there is no need to suppose reference to any particular Saying. Cf. Eph. v. 8. 13, 14. 'Sons of Light' belong to the light, and the light belongs to them ; it is their natural home, and also their patrimony to which

they have a natural right. Cf. Rom. xiii. 12 ; Jn. xi. 9. See Deissmann, *Bible St.* p. 165.

Sons of day] 'Day' here does not mean the 'Day of the Lord' ; it refers to the passage of the Thessalonians out of the night of heathenism into the daylight of the Gospel. There should be a full stop here. What follows belongs to v. 6 and should have been included in v. 6. With the existing division there should be only a semicolon at the end of v. 5. The change from 'you' to 'we' shows the true division of the sentences.

We have nothing to do with night, nor yet with darkness] That is true of the ideal Christian. Note the chiasmus ; 'light, day—night, darkness.' The arrangement is rather frequent in Paul ; 1 Cor. iii. 17, iv. 10, viii. 13, xiii. 2 ; 2 Cor. iv. 3, vi. 8, ix. 6, x. 12, etc.

6. surely, therefore] An argumentative inference from the last sentence of v. 5. The introductory combination of particles (*ἀρα οὖν*) is frequent in Paul and is peculiar to him in the N.T. ; 2 Thess. ii. 15 ; Rom. v. 18, vii. 25, viii. 12, etc.

to slumber] To be idle and morally inert ; a different verb (*καθεύδειν*) from that which is used of the sleep of death (*κοιμᾶσθαι*) iv. 13-15. Cf. Eph. v. 14 ; Mk. xiii. 36.

the rest of the world] the heathen ; cf. iv. 5.

be awake and be sober] The same verbs (*γρηγορεῖν* and *νήφειν*) are combined 1 Pet. v. 8 in reverse order. It is possible that here also we have a reminiscence of a Saying of Christ ; Mt. xxv. 13, xxvi. 41 ; Mk. xiv. 38. See on vv. 13, 15. 'Be sober' means more than abstention from intoxication. It excludes all excess in self-indulgence and all unhealthy excitement, such as that at Thessalonica about the Lord's Return. Cf. 2 Tim. iv. 5 ; 1 Pet. i. 13, iv. 7 ; Rom. xiii. 13.

7. For those who slumber, etc.] The expressions are to be understood literally, not in a spiritual sense. It is quite in St. Paul's manner to use words first in a metaphorical and then in a literal sense, or *vice versa*, as he does here with day and night, light and darkness, being alert and



slumbering, being sober and drunken. In some places we are not sure which sense is uppermost. Of course those who are sons of light and of day must be awake and sober, for the opposite behaviour is associated with the darkness of night. Slumbering by day and getting drunk by day are marks of extreme laziness and depravity.\*

8. 'We Christians, who live in the presence of Him who is the Light of the World, are specially bound to be alert and sober. We have taken arms in His service; and for soldiers to sleep or be drunk on duty is a monstrous offence.' The change from the present tense (*ὄντες*) to the past (*ἐνδυσάμενοι*) must be observed: and the meaning may be that wakefulness and sobriety are not enough; we must also be armed.

**breastplate . . . helmet**] Is. lix. 17 seems to be in St. Paul's mind, and possibly Wisd. v. 17-19. That he was familiar with the Book of Wisdom can hardly be doubted. The idea of Christian armour is often in his mind, but he is not careful always to give the same meaning to the different pieces; Rom. vi. 13, xiii. 12-14; 2 Cor. vi. 7, x. 4; Eph. vi. 11-17. Cf. the military words in iv. 16. The comparison of the life of the Christian to that of a soldier is so obvious, especially to one who had seen so much of military life as St. Paul had done, that he would probably have made it without any suggestions from the LXX. The initiated in mystery religions were sometimes regarded as sacred cohorts in the service of the god or goddess; the Stoics compared life to a warfare, and the man who loyally accepted his lot was sometimes called a soldier of Destiny. It has been noticed that no backpiece is mentioned, not even in Eph. vi. 11-17.

\* It is doubtful whether any distinction is intended here between *μεθύσκεισθαι* and *μεθύειν*: but as there is a change of verb in the Greek it is worth while to make some change in the English; 'get drunk . . . are drunk.' The Vulgate has *ebrii sunt* for both. Cf. Mt. xxiv. 49; Lk. xii. 45; Acts ii. 15; Eccles. x. 16. Even the heathen recognized that revelry in the morning was disgraceful; Cicero, *Phil.* ii. 41; Juvenal i. 49, 50; Catul. xlvii. 5, 6.

The Christian may sometimes avoid a conflict ; but once engaged he does not turn to flight. Hastings' *DAC.* art. 'Armour.'

**faith, love, hope]** See on i. 3, where we have the same order, as also Col. i. 4, 5 ; cf. Gal. v. 5, 6. Faith and love are naturally combined, for faith without loving activity is worthless. Faith may start action, but without love the action will not last. In this life hope may be a stronger motive than love ; it is when eternity is added that the supremacy of love is seen.

**hope of salvation]** This hope can be made a certainty if the right means are taken, and therefore there is no need to be despondent.

**9. appoint us to]** Cf. 1 Pet. ii. 8 ; Acts xiii. 47.

**His wrath]** See on i. 10 and ii. 16.

**to secure for ourselves]** Cf. 2 Thess. ii. 14 and Heb. x. 39, where the same expression (εἰς περιποίησιν) occurs. It has the meaning of 'securing' there, and no other meaning need be sought here. The Vulgate has *in acquisitionem* in all three places. Cf. the use of the cognate verb (περιποιεῖν) Is. xliii. 21.

**10. died for us]** It was 'about us' (περὶ ἡμῶν) that He was thinking when He willed to die. He died a death in which we had a special interest. This is the only passage in 1 and 2 Thessalonians in which our interest in the death of Christ is mentioned ; and " it is the most vague expression that could have been used to signify that Christ's death had something to do with our salvation " (Denney, *ad loc.* p. 196). Cf. v. 25. Elsewhere we have 'on behalf of' (ὕπέρ), 2 Cor. v. 15 ; Gal. iii. 13 ; etc. Sometimes also 'instead of' (ἀντὶ), Mk. x. 45 ; Mt. xx. 28. But in late Greek the classical distinctions between prepositions are not fully maintained, and it is rash to build theories upon such distinctions. The purpose of the death is clearly stated. He died in order that (ἵνα) we should share His life. In some way His death wins life for us. This simple statement implies much previous instruction.

**whether awake . . . or slumbering]** The same verbs are

used as in *v.* 6, but with an obvious change of meaning. Cf. Rom. xiv. 9.

**one and all with Him we should live]** This is the grand result, placed, with emphasis, at the end ; and, as in iv. 17, we have *σύν*. The concluding word is 'live' (*ζήσωμεν*). Thus we have a sure hope of salvation. For 'one and all' see on iv. 17. On the general import of this verse, and its position in St. Paul's teaching, see Lightfoot, *Biblical Essays*, pp. 230 f.

**11. Accordingly]** As in iii. 1 (*διό*). Because God has appointed us to the salvation which Christ has made it possible for us to win, and which is equally secure, whether or no we are alive when He returns.

**as we said before]** In iv. 18 ; see on ii. 11, iv. 1, 10.

**build up each other]** A favourite metaphor with St. Paul, especially in 1 Corinthians (*οἰκοδομεῖν, οἰκοδομή, ἐποικοδομεῖν*). In most of the places 'build up' is a better rendering than 'edify.' This building up is of universal obligation. The care of souls is not the privilege of a class, but the duty of all. The Church is a building of which each Christian is a stone, and each Christian is also a building ; and in both cases the building is a temple of the Holy Spirit. The metaphor is found in all four groups of the Pauline Epistles, but this is the only occurrence of it in the earliest group. It denotes spiritual progress of the most comprehensive kind. Cf. 1 Cor. iii. 9-17, vi. 19 ; 2 Cor. vi. 16 ; Gal. ii. 18 ; Eph. ii. 20-22, iv. 12, 16, 29 ; 1 Tim. iii. 15 ; 2 Tim. ii. 19 ; and see *DAC.* art. 'Edification.'

**each the other]** Lit. 'one the one' (*εἰς τὸν ἕνα*, not *εἰς τὸν ἕνα*, as has been suggested) ; cf. 1 Cor. iv. 6. The change from 'one another' (*ἀλλήλους*) to the much less common expression is made for the sake of variety and perhaps some increase of force.

**as indeed you really are doing]** As in iv. 1, 10, the writers are anxious to avoid seeming to be finding fault. They are not blaming the Thessalonians, who have acted nobly under persecution, but are exhorting them to maintain their virtues and improve upon them ; cf. 2 Thess. iii. 4. Even

when he has a great deal to blame in his various converts, the Apostle generally finds something to praise, for which he thanks God.

V. 12-22. EXHORTATIONS RESPECTING CHURCH  
DISCIPLINE AND HOLINESS OF LIFE

<sup>12</sup> And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you ; <sup>13</sup> And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves. <sup>14</sup> Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. <sup>15</sup> See that none render evil for evil unto any *man* ; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. <sup>16</sup> Rejoice evermore : <sup>17</sup> Pray without ceasing : <sup>18</sup> In every thing give thanks : for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. <sup>19</sup> Quench not the spirit : <sup>20</sup> Despise not prophesyings : <sup>21</sup> Prove all things ; hold fast that which is good. <sup>22</sup> Abstain from all appearance of evil.

The link with what precedes is not very close ; but there is a natural passage from the special topic of matters connected with the subject of Christ's Coming to duties connected with Church Order and Christian life in general during the interval of waiting for the Coming. The object of the section is to promote an increase in healthy modes of life by orderly, cheerful, and devout conduct. The series of brief injunctions which it contains forms a code of standing orders for all Christians.

' <sup>12</sup> And now we ask you as friends, Brethren, to recognize the authority of those who toil among you and preside over you in the Lord and admonish you. <sup>13</sup> We ask you to regard them with love in the most fervent degree in appreciation of the amount and value of their work. *And*, while you pay respect to them, be at peace among yourselves.

<sup>14</sup> Now we exhort you, Brethren, to admonish those who are disorderly ; give encouragement to the fainthearted ; give support to the weak ; be forbearing and longsuffering towards all men. <sup>15</sup> See to it that no one pays back to anybody evil in return for evil : on the contrary, on all occasions make it your practice to seek eagerly after that which is beneficial, both with regard to one another and to all men. <sup>16</sup> On all occasions rejoice ; <sup>17</sup> unceasingly cherish a spirit of prayer ; <sup>18</sup> in all that happens to you be thankful ; we charge you



to do all this because it is God's will with regard to you, manifested in the power of Christ Jesus. <sup>19</sup> When the Spirit kindles any of you, beware of quenching it ; <sup>20</sup> when it inspires any to speak, do not set at naught its suggestions. <sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, do not give heed without testing. Test all things ; hold fast only that which is sound and good ; <sup>22</sup> abstain from every visible form of evil.'

12. ask you as friends, Brethren] See on iv. 1 and i. 4. With the general sense cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.

recognize the authority of] 'Know them (εἰδέναι) for what they are,' appreciate their character and treat them with respect. Cf. the similar use of 'acknowledge' (ἐπιγινώσκετε) 1 Cor. xvi. 18.

That the Apostle had already ordained presbyters in so infantile a Church is improbable. On the other hand, it is unlikely that he had made no provision for organization. "The Church of Christ can no more hold together without officers, rules, and institutions than any other society of men" (Schaff, *Apostolic Christianity*, II., page 487). See Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry*, *sub init.*

toil] A favourite verb (κοπιᾶν) found in all four groups of the Apostle's Epistles. It is one of the many Pauline words which are found in Luke's report of the speech at Miletus, Acts xx. 35 ; see on ii. 12, iv. 6, v. 8. It implies working with effort and consequent weariness. In i. 3 we have the cognate substantive (κόπος). As in iv. 16 the 'archangel's cry' and the 'trumpet of God' explain the manner of the 'commanding summons,' so here the 'presiding' and 'admonishing' explain the manner of the 'toil.' It is the Church-workers who take the lead and check disorder. The fact of their being workers is mentioned first ;—an indirect rebuke to idlers (iv. 11) ; and we may surmise that it was through their efficiency as workers that they came to preside and had the right to admonish.

preside over you] The word (προΐσταμένους) implies some kind of leaders, but it can hardly be a technical title for a particular rank, like 'presbyter' or 'deacon.' It describes function rather than designates rank, activity rather than an office ; and it implies protection and care. Cf. Rom.

xii. 8. These workers who guide and admonish no doubt owed their leading position to personal gifts ; and when official appointments began to be made, persons whom experience had proved to be specially gifted were chosen to be ‘ presbyters ’ or ‘ elders ’ in the technical sense. It is certainly incorrect to suppose that we have here three classes of officials ; and it is therefore futile to conjecture that they are the catechists, the presbyters, and the evangelists. The same persons work, preside, and admonish, as is shown by the one article (τούς) which brackets the three functions. With ‘ those who preside over you ’ may be compared the equally vague expression ‘ those who have the rule over you ’ (οἱ ἡγούμενοι), Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24 ; and with the triplet here may be compared the triplet in ii. 11.

It is unreasonable to look for a settled order of government and a regularly organized clergy in a period during which Christ’s Return was expected almost daily. Spiritual functions, and the names for them, were alike fluid. *Les fidèles sont classés par le don spirituel qu’ils exercent* (Renan, p. 238). See Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, 1897, p. 126 ; Hastings’ *DAC.* art. ‘ Church Government.’ Harnack remarks ; “ It is obvious that in Galatia and at Corinth no organization whatever existed for a decade, or even longer ” (*Mission and Expansion*, I. p. 434). Von Dobschütz says much the same ; “ To discharge all this labour of love there were in the beginning no responsible officials on whom the burden might be shifted : it was the brotherly duty of every Christian ” (*The Apostolic Age*, p. 79). There were certainly none at Corinth when St. Paul complained that ‘ brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers,’ and when he rebuked, not officials, but the congregation, for the monstrous desecration of the Lord’s Supper. See essays on the Christian Ministry by Sanday, Harnack, Salmon, Simcox, and others in the *Expositor*, 3rd Series, V. and VI.

in the Lord] Added, as in iv. 1, to show the source of the authority to preside and admonish ; viz. the Lord who gave the qualifying gifts. It would hardly be necessary to

remind the Thessalonians that it is spiritual and not political rulers who are meant. There is no hint that St. Paul had appointed them.

**admonish]** Lit. 'put in mind' (*νουθετοῦντας*), but always used of calling attention to faults or defects; 2 Thess. iii. 15; Rom. xv. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 14; Col. i. 28, iii. 16. Elsewhere in the N.T., Acts xx. 31 only, where it occurs in St. Paul's speech at Miletus; see last note on iv. 6. Here we have the rudiments of Church discipline. Teaching, especially of doctrine, was done mainly by the Apostle and his colleagues; but from the first there must be provision for the maintenance of morality and order.

**13. regard them with love in the most fervent degree]** The construction is uncertain, whether the adverb (*ὑπερεκπερισσού*) belongs to what precedes it (*ἡγείσθαι αὐτούς*), or to what follows (*ἐν ἀγάπῃ*). 'Esteem them very highly in love' may be right. In either case we have an unusual mode of expression, but either makes good sense. The persons whose gifts have brought them into prominence would be of the same social class as those whom they had led and admonished, and therefore might easily be regarded with jealousy and suspicion by the latter. The large majority of the Thessalonian converts belonged to the labouring classes, and these are apt to resent dictation from persons who "are no better than we are." Christ Himself suffered from this spirit; Mk. vi. 2-4. In any case these leaders were new to their position, which was new also to those whom they endeavoured to lead. Compare Didaché xv. 2; "Therefore despise them not, for they are those that are the honoured men among you with the prophets and teachers."

**in appreciation of the amount and value of their work]** Lit. 'because of (*διὰ*) their work,' which was very laborious (*κοπιῶντας*) and beneficial (*νουθετοῦντας*). By manifesting respect and affection the Thessalonians would show that they appreciated all this.

**be at peace among yourselves]** This follows closely on what precedes. They could not be on good terms with one

another, if some of them were ignoring the directions of the generally recognized leaders. Here again we have a parallel in the *Didaché* ; “ Reprove one another not in wrath, but in peace, and with every one that transgresses against another let no one talk, nor yet hear a word from you, until he repents ’ (xv. 3). The reading ‘ among them ’ (*ἐν αὐτοῖς* for *ἐν ἑαυτοῖς*), *i.e.* among the leaders, can hardly be right, and, if right, it could hardly mean ‘ in your dealings with them.’ ‘ Be at peace ’ (*εἰρηνεύετε*) means ‘ continue to maintain peace.’ It does not imply that quarrels exist ; Rom. xii. 18 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 11. The charge may be an echo of another of Christ’s Sayings ; Mk. ix. 50, the only passage in which the verb occurs outside the Pauline Epistles. Cf. vv. 2, 5, 6 and ii. 16.

14. **Now we exhort you, Brethren, to admonish** It is not clear whether the writers continue to address the whole congregation or turn to the leaders in particular. The use of the verb ‘ admonish ’ is rather in favour of the second alternative ; and it is obvious that those who are to be admonished, or encouraged, or supported are not addressed. In that case the connecting particle (*δέ*) might be rendered ‘ But.’ On the other hand, the preceding ‘ Be at peace among yourselves ’ is certainly addressed to the whole congregation ; and why should ‘ Brethren ’ in this verse be different in meaning from ‘ Brethren ’ in v. 12 ? In this case the connecting particle might be ‘ And.’ ‘ Now ’ would suit either view. Cf. iii. 11.

**those who are disorderly** The term is a military one (*τοὺς ἀτάκτους*), ‘ those who leave the ranks.’ This might mean either the insubordinate, who disobey orders, or the careless, who march and drill in a slovenly manner. The latter is probably the idea here. In papyri the cognate verb (*ἀτακτεῖν*) is often used as interchangeable with ‘ to be idle ’ (*ἀργεῖν*). We know of no actual rebellion against authority at Thessalonica, but there were many who neglected their duties and wasted their time, thinking that the Return was imminent ; iv. 11. These excited ‘ loafers ’ needed to be kept in order. The next two classes are



depressed in character and need encouragement and support. Cf. 2 Thess. iii. 6, 11.

**the fainthearted]** An O.T. word (ὀλιγοψύχους) ; Is. xxv. 5, xxxv. 4, liv. 6, lvii. 15 ; Prov. xviii. 14 ; Ecclus. vii. 10. It is used of those who are broken in spirit and have lost confidence in themselves. This might be the result of the persecution to which they had been subjected, or to the delay of the Return, which made them anxious about the condition of those who had died and about their own prospects. Cf. ii. 11, iv. 18.

**give support to the weak]** ‘ Lay hold of them (ἀντέχεσθε) and help them to stand firm ’ ; used Tit. i. 9 of holding on to the faithful word. The verb is always middle in the N.T. and almost always in the O.T. In the O.T., as in Tit. i. 9, it is used of laying hold in order to support *oneself* ; e.g. laying hold of wisdom (Prov. iii. 18, iv. 6), of salvation, righteousness, and My covenant (Is. lvi. 2, 4, 6), the Law (Jer. ii. 8). ‘ Cling to ’ has this double meaning in English. Cf. Mt. vi. 24 ; Lk. xvi. 13. ‘ The weak ’ means those who are feeble in spiritual insight and character ; 1 Cor. viii. 10, ix. 22.

**be forbearing and longsuffering]** Not quick-tempered, but long-tempered (μακρόθυμοι, *longanimés*). It implies patience of injuries and irritations, without paying back in act or word. We all of us need this forbearance, and we all of us can show it. Opportunities, both ways, abound. Cf. 1 Cor. xiii. 4 ; Gal. v. 22 ; Mt. xviii. 26, 29.

**towards all men]** Not only towards disorderly, and fainthearted and weak Christians, who will often be provoking enough, but also (as in iii. 12) towards Jews and heathen, whether persecutors or not. This is plain from what is added in v. 15. Such longsuffering is a specially Divine characteristic. God is *patiens quia aeternus* ; He can afford to wait.

**15. that no one pays back evil in return for evil]** All members of the congregation are to see to this. The charge shows that there was danger of retaliation, possibly in consequence of the persecution. It is not clear whether

each person is to see to himself, or all are to see to each. What follows is in favour of the former. We have the same expression (*κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόναι*) Rom. xii. 17 and 1 Pet. iii. 9. It looks like another reminiscence of one of Christ's Sayings; Mt. v. 39, 44; Lk. vi. 27-29. Even the Jews had seen that the *lex talionis* needed modification; Exod. xxiii. 4, 5; Deut. xxii. 1; Job xxxi. 29; Prov. xxiv. 17, xxv. 21; Eccclus. xxviii. 1-7. See Introduction, V.

**on all occasions]** See on iv. 17.

**make it your practice to seek eagerly]** As in the preceding sentences, we have the present imperative, and the verb itself (*διώκετε*) implies steady pursuit of some end, a meaning which is specially common in Paul; Rom. ix. 31, xii. 13, xiv. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 1; etc.

**that which is beneficial]** Lit. 'the good' (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*). But 'evil' (*κακόν*) in the previous sentence means that which is injurious, and therefore 'the good' here means that which is the reverse of injurious. See on iii. 8.

**to one another]** Here, as in iii. 12, there may possibly be a suggestion of strained relations between Gentile and Jewish converts. But in neither place is any such explanation of the words necessary.

**all men]** While 'one another' refers to fellow-Christians, 'all men,' as in v. 14, includes Jews and heathen.

**16. On all occasions rejoice]** For the sixth time in this short letter we have the favourite adverb (*πάντοτε*), which is rarely used by other N.T. writers, excepting St. John. The repetition of the adverb points to some connexion between this injunction and the previous one. 'On all occasions seek to benefit some one, and then on all occasions you will have joy.' But there is more in it than that. Joy is in the front rank among the gifts of the Spirit; Gal. v. 22; Rom. xiv. 17, xv. 13; Phil. ii. 18. Cf. Jn. xv. 11, xvi. 22, xvii. 13; etc. The injunction must have seemed startling to converts who were suffering much persecution; but the Apostle dares to give it both to these and to other Macedonians; Phil. ii. 18, iii. 1, iv. 4. He knew that he was not asking for what was impossible, for he practised

this virtue himself ; 2 Cor. vi. 10, vii. 4 ; Phil. ii. 2. It is not more paradoxical than the Beatitudes, and the next injunction shows how it may be accomplished. One who has acquired the habit of converse with God will always have cause for joy. In all these three injunctions (vv. 16, 17, 18) the adverbial expression is placed first with emphasis ; it is better to keep it first in English. All three injunctions are specially needed in times of trouble, such as persecution. Cf. Exod. xxii. 23, 27 ; Job xxxiv. 28.

17. **Unceasingly cherish a spirit of prayer]** Something of this kind is the meaning of the charge 'Unceasingly pray.' Cf. Rom. xii. 12 ; Eph. vi. 18 ; Col. iv. 2 ; Acts i. 14, ii. 42, vi. 4 ; Mk. xiv. 38 ; Lk. xxi. 36. The charge certainly means more than 'Never discontinue your daily prayers.' On the other hand it cannot mean 'Never cease saying prayers,' for any attempt to do that would soon make the repetition of the words as mechanical as a prayer-wheel. It is the keeping constantly in mind the presence of God, and one's dependence on Him, that is meant. Augustine (*Eph.* 130, To Proba, ix. 18) interprets thus ; "Desire, without intermission, from Him who alone can give it, a happy life ; and happy no life can be but that which is eternal. This, therefore, let us desire continually from the Lord our God ; and thus let us pray continually." Origen (*Hom. Sam.* i. 9) confesses that "once, when he read it, he asked how it could possibly be fulfilled ; and discussing it in several passages he concludes that a spiritual rather than a temporal 'ceasing' is contemplated, and that the whole of the Christian's life, even eating, drinking, and sleeping, may be regarded as a stream of prayer, offered to God's glory" (Abbott, *The Founding of the New Kingdom*, p. 233). "In all true praying we have the cry of an inward hunger for better being and doing. . . . There is the wistful reaching forth towards something higher and more perfect. Wherever, then, improvement is being desired and sought (not improvement in our surroundings, but in ourselves ; not improvement in what we have, but in what we are and do), there is prayer, even though it may not be breaking out at the time

in any cry to God, since there is the very same spirit which breathes in the cry of prayer" (Hastings' *Great Christian Doctrines. Prayer*, p. 420). Jerome (*Ep.* 22, To Eustochium, 37) says that "to the saints their very sleep is supplication," but, nevertheless, there must be fixed times for daily prayer in which the habitual yearning finds expression in words.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire  
Uttered or unexpressed,  
The motion of a hidden fire  
That trembles in the breast" (*Montgomery.*)

St. Paul laboured night and day with his hands ; yet he was constantly praying, especially for his converts ; see 2 Thess. i. 11 ; Eph. i. 16 ; Col. i. 9 ; cf. i. 3.

18. In all that happens to you be thankful] In every circumstance of life (ἐν παντί) ; 2 Cor. vii. 11, 16, ix. 8, 11, xi. 6, 9 ; Phil. iv. 2. "The precept is universal in sphere, as the two before it are continuous in time" (Eadie, *ad loc.*) ; cf. 2 Cor. vi. 4 f. Even in persecutions, sicknesses, bereavements, and other trials, thanksgiving is due ; εὐχαριστοῦντες πάντοτε ὑπὲρ πάντων Eph. v. 20 ; cf. Col. i. 12, ii. 7, iii. 17, iv. 2 ; Jas. i. 2 ; Prov. iii. 11, 12 ; Eccus. ii. 1-11. The combination of prayer and thanksgiving is frequent ; iii. 9, 10 ; Phil. iv. 6 ; Col. iv. 2 ; 1 Tim. ii. 1. In the stocks of the inner prison at Philippi the outraged Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God ; Acts xvi. 25. The duty of giving thanks to God is often insisted upon by St. Paul ; Rom. xiv. 6 ; 2 Cor. i. 11, iv. 15, ix. 11, 12 ; and the references given above. It is one of the defects of the Book of Common Prayer that the element of thanksgiving is somewhat small as compared with that of supplication.

to do all this] 'This' possibly refers to all three of the injunctions and not to the last one only. It may seem to be impossible to do all these things. But it cannot really be impossible ; for God wills it, and He does not require us to do impossibilities. We have here an anticipation of Kant's "We ought, therefore we can." The confident belief that



the Lord would return, and return soon, rendered the acceptance of these exacting principles possible and even natural. *Une immense espérance donnait à ces préceptes de religion pure l'efficacité qu'ils n'ont jamais eue par eux-mêmes* (Renan, p. 248).

in the power of Christ Jesus] 'In Christ' or 'in Christ Jesus' (seldom 'in Jesus' or 'in Jesus Christ') is frequent in Paul, and always in reference to the Glorified Christ. The phrase, therefore, requires to be expanded in English in order to make this clear; iv. 16; Rom. iii. 24, viii. 1, 2, xii. 5, xv. 17; etc., etc. Where 'Lord' is added the meaning is clear without expansion; e.g. i. 1; Rom. viii. 39; 1 Cor. xv. 31; etc. See Sanday and Headlam on Rom. vi. 11.

19. From Pentecost onwards the operation of the Spirit is spoken of as analogous to the action of fire. *Spiritus, ubi est ardet*. It kindles men's hearts and makes them glow, and those who receive it and respond to it are said to be fervent. Hence the warning against 'quenching the Spirit.' If it stood alone, we should understand it as a general caution against causing the influence of the Spirit to cease by habitual neglect of it. Augustine (*Ep.* xcvi. 3) takes it in this sense; "The Apostle says, Quench not the Spirit; not that He can be quenched, but that those who act as if they wished to have Him quenched are deservedly spoken of as quenchers of the Spirit." But what follows seems to show that, in the general unsettlement at Thessalonica, the special charismatic gifts of the Spirit were being ignored, and the manifestations of them were being repressed. If disregard of these Divine endowments continued, they might be withdrawn altogether. Hence the charge, 'Cease to quench the Spirit.' For the various manifestations see 1 Cor. xii. 8-10, xiv. 26.

20. The charge against 'setting prophesyings at naught' looks like an explanation of the more general charge in v. 19, or at any rate as an example of what is there condemned. By 'prophesying' is meant the inspired utterance of Divine truths for the edification of others, and prediction of the

future is not necessarily included. At Corinth this invaluable gift was despised in comparison with the much less valuable gift of ecstatic utterance for the edification of oneself ; 1 Cor. xiv. There is no evidence of ecstatic utterances at Thessalonica ; but apparently inspired preachings were for some reason not treated with proper respect. There may have been impostors or fanatics, who caused all prophesying to be suspected. Cf. 2 Thess. ii. 2, which implies something of the kind. Hence the charge, 'Cease to set them at naught.' For the verb cf. Rom. xiv. 3, 10 ; 1 Cor. i. 28 ; Gal. iv. 14.

21. Nevertheless] It is possible that the conjunction (δέ) ought to be omitted. In that case the meaning may be, 'Do not reject what seems to be a manifestation of the Spirit ; nay rather, test everything (however unpromising), and keep what is really good.' 'Do not reject without testing.'

Test all things] See on ii. 4, where the same verb is used ; also Trench, *Syn.* § lxxiv. Not all who come forward as prophets are really inspired. Some may be deluded, some may wish to delude. The congregation must make a practice of testing all such claims ; 1 Cor. xii. 2, xiv. 32 ; Eph. v. 10 ; 1 Jn. iv. 1 ; Mt. vii. 15, 16 ; xxiv. 11, 24. The kind of test that is to be applied is not stated ; but 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' It is spiritual discernment rather than intellectual sagacity that is required. There was a gift for discerning spirits (1 Cor. xii. 10, xiv. 29), and there may be allusion to it here. See Didaché xi. 1-12, esp. 12. But the injunction may mean more than 'test all spirits and all utterances which profess to be inspired.' It may mean 'Find out the spiritual value of *everything*, and hold fast to it, or hold aloof from it, accordingly.' Yet the testing of spiritual gifts is primarily meant. Cf. Rev. ii. 2.\*

hold fast] Cf. 1 Cor. xi. 2, xv. 2 ; Rom. i. 18.

\* Twice in his Letters (*Epp.* lxi. 1, lxxxiv. 7) Jerome quotes the Apostle as saying 'Read all things,' and applies the words to the writings of Origen.

sound and good] Able to stand all tests, being really valuable in itself, independently of all results (τὸ καλόν); Rom. vii. 18; Jas. iv. 17; Job xxxiv. 4.

Many of the Fathers connect this injunction with a Saying which is frequently attributed to Christ, but once or twice to St. Paul, γίνεσθε δόκιμοι τραπεζίται. It is impossible to find a satisfactory English translation. 'Show yourselves tried bankers,' 'Prove yourselves to be sound money-changers,' 'Become approved exchangers' are all of them literal, and are all unsatisfying. 'Put your talents to good use,' 'Make the best use of your opportunities,' is the meaning which is suggested by the words. In connexion with this passage they might mean, 'Become experts in discerning spiritual values.' See Lightfoot *ad loc.* and Westcott, *Intr. to the Study of the Gospels*, Appendix C; also Suicer, *τραπεζίτης*.

The punctuation in the A.V. is faulty. There should be only a comma or semicolon at the end of v. 21. Both 'hold fast' and 'abstain' are closely connected with 'test.' Cf. Rom. xii. 9, where we have a similar alternative.

22. abstain from every visible form of evil] The construction is uncertain, and also the exact signification of 'form' (ἀπὸ παντὸς εἶδους πονηροῦ ἀπέχεσθε). 'Evil' may be an adjective; 'abstain from every evil form': and 'form' may mean either 'outward appearance,' or 'semblance,' or 'kind.' Of these three, 'outward appearance' (without any idea of unreality) is probably right. 'Semblance' is almost certainly wrong; the evil to be avoided is really evil. 'Kind' or 'species' is possibly right. Although this meaning is not found elsewhere in the N.T., it is found in the LXX, Ecclus. xxiii. 16, xxv. 2; and Josephus (*Ant.* X. iii. 1) has πᾶν εἶδος πονηρίας. It makes little difference whether we take 'evil' as a substantive or an adjective; but to take it as a substantive makes a better antithesis to 'that which is good.' Cf. Rom. xii. 9, where, however, we have τὸ πονηρόν and τῷ ἀγαθῷ. In Didaché iii. 1 we have what looks like a reminiscence of this charge; "Flee from every evil and from every thing that is like it"

(φεύγε ἀπὸ παντὸς πονηροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ παντὸς ὁμοίου αὐτοῦ). It is of more importance to note that the 'evil' is of a malignant kind (πονηροῦ, not κακοῦ) ; absolute badness, as in the case of the evil one. Cf. Job. i. 1, ii. 3, and see Trench, *Syn.* § lxxxiv. 'Abstain from' may remind us, and was perhaps intended to remind the Thessalonians, of the charge given in iv. 3. The idea of base metal—'stick to the genuine metal ; have nothing to do with the base'—is not suggested by the wording, the meaning of which is quite general. See *DAC.* art. 'Abstinence,' p. 9.

### V. 23, 24. PRAYER FOR THE THESSALONIANS

<sup>23</sup> And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and *I pray God* your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it*.

The way in which the Apostle's exhortations so often shade off into prayer illustrates the meaning of his injunction to 'pray without ceasing.' The spirit of prayer is always in the background ; iii. 11 ; 2 Thess. ii. 16, iii. 16. As Chrysostom says, like a true teacher, he helps his disciples not only with counsels, but with prayers. Where there is no actual prayer, there is often a recognition of his and his converts' entire dependence upon Divine support for all the good that has been effected or can be attained ; i. 2, 9, ii. 2, 4, 13, iii. 9, v. 25, 28 ; 2 Thess. i. 3, 5, 12, etc. Similar features are found in other letters.

'<sup>23</sup> Now may the God of peace Himself help you to do this : may He sanctify you so that you may become complete in holiness ; and in complete entirety may your spirit and soul and body be preserved free from reproach at the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> This prayer for your sanctification is well founded. He who calls you to be holy is faithful. He not only calls you, He will also do His part towards making the call effectual.'

23. Now] These pregnant exhortations to continue and increase in holiness of life (12-22) having been given, the Apostle passes on (δέ) to an indispensable condition of their



being effectual ; they must be aided by the blessing of God. This being the connexion, ' Now ' or ' And,' rather than ' But,' gives the force of the conjunction. Cf. the prayer in iii. 11-13, which begins with the same words (*Αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Θεός*), and where both A.V. and R.V. have ' Now ' to mark the transition.

**the God of peace]** A Pauline expression, especially common in similar contexts ; Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20 ; Phil. iv. 9 ; cf. Heb. xiii. 20 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 33. We have ' the Lord of peace,' 2 Thess. iii. 16 ; ' the God of love and peace,' 2 Cor. xiii. 11 ; ' the God of hope,' Rom. xv. 13 ; ' the God of all comfort,' 2 Cor. i. 3 ; ' the God of patience and of comfort,' Rom. xv. 5. The characterizing genitive is in each case determined by the context. The unsettled and excited Thessalonians need peace for the establishment of a Christian life. Cf. the charge in v. 13.

**Himself]** Emphatic, as in iii. 11 : nothing less will serve. God's help is contrasted with their own efforts.

**sanctify you]** ' Make you in effect what He called you to be—saints ' ; 1 Cor. i. 2 ; cf. Exod. xxxi. 13 ; Lev. xi. 44 ; xx. 7, 8.

**complete in holiness]** So that no part of their nature is left unsanctified. This idea (*ὁλοτελείς*) is repeated in a slightly different form by ' in complete entirety,' or ' in unbroken totality ' (*ὁλόκληρον*). See Trench, *Syn.* § xxii. The latter expression belongs to all three of the words which follow, not to the first alone. The rendering ' your whole spirit ' is in this respect misleading. Each of the three constituents of human nature is to be preserved in its entirety.

**spirit and soul and body]** The three are placed in order of merit, which is sometimes reversed, with the highest last. Origen has both arrangements. Man's nature is commonly regarded as of two parts, one material and the other not, body and soul or flesh and spirit. This division is found in heathen and in Jewish writers as well as in the N.T. In the N.T. ' spirit ' and ' soul ' are sometimes synonymous, as in the first verse of the *Magnificat*. But sometimes, as here,

‘spirit’ (πνεῦμα) is the higher, and ‘soul’ (ψυχή) is the lower element in the immaterial part. Cf. 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15, xv. 44–46, and see Westcott’s Additional Note on Heb. iv. 12; also Augustine, *Conf.* VII. xvii. 23, 25.

This diversity of usage shows that we are not justified in claiming any one passage of Scripture as giving inspired authority for any psychological system. Here the Apostle is not committing himself to a trichotomist theory; still less is he declaring that such a theory is certainly true. He is praying that the whole being of the Thessalonians, in the most comprehensive sense, may be sanctified and preserved.\*

Brightman (*Journal of Theol. Studies.* Jan. 1901, p. 273) has shown that this trichotomy is very common in the Egyptian liturgies, but always in the strange order, ‘soul, body, spirit,’ and that this order occurs elsewhere in liturgies, though not often. Tertullian (*Marcion.* v. 15) has this order reversed, *spiritus noster et corpus et anima*. It is difficult to account for it.

**be preserved free from reproach]** ‘Be kept so as to be free from reproach.’ See on ii. 10, where we have the same adverb (ἀμέμπτως). The reproach implied by the adverb is that of being defective or faulty, rather than that of being utterly wrong; and the reproach has reference to the Judgment, at which it is prayed that the Thessalonians may be found blameless.

**at the Coming]** ‘Unto the Coming’ is wrong as a translation (ἐν παρουσίᾳ), and gives a wrong impression as to what is desired. Cf. Wisd. x. 5, where the Divine Wisdom is said to have preserved the righteous Abraham blameless unto God (ἐτήρησεν αὐτὸν ἄμεμπτον Θεῷ).

There is no sufficient reason for rejecting καὶ ὁλόκληρον . . . τηρηθείη as an interpolation, unless the fact that v. 24 would fit on well to the first sentence of v. 23 be regarded as such.

**24. He who calls you]** The preceding verse shows what is

\* But we can hardly infer from this that at this period St. Paul did not contemplate any transformation of the earthly body into a heavenly or spiritual body. There is no evidence either way.

meant. 'He who calls you to be saints, has an interest in your sanctification.' 'Calls,' not 'called' (*ὁ καλῶν*, not *ὁ καλέσας*). He is their Caller, their Inviter ; that is His relation to the converts. See on ii. 12 and cf. 1 Cor. i. 9.

is faithful] He will therefore be true to His character as one who calls men to a holy life ; iv. 7. He does not call and then leave those who are called to fail for want of His help. If they strive to respond to His invitation, they are sure to be sanctified and preserved. Cf. Deut. vii. 9, xxxii. 4 ; Is. xlix. 7, 15-17. 'Faithful' is emphatic by position. The verse has the ring of a magnificent confidence. Cf. 2 Thess. iii. 3 ; 1 Cor. i. 9, x. 13.

### v. 25-28. CONCLUDING CHARGES AND BENEDICTION

<sup>25</sup> Brethren, pray for us. <sup>26</sup> Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss. <sup>27</sup> I charge you by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren. <sup>28</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

The letter draws rapidly to a close. After three brief injunctions the farewell blessing is given. The first injunction may have been suggested by the preceding prayer. The writers have just been interceding for the Thessalonians. They now ask for their prayers. But St. Paul so often asks for the prayers of those whom he addresses, and so often prays for them, that there is no need to assume any connexion in this case between the prayer and the request.

The request shows us one great difference, to which no attention is called in Scripture, between St. Paul and Christ. The Apostle prays for himself and for his disciples, and he charges them to pray for themselves and for others, and in particular for himself. Christ prays for Himself and for His disciples, and He charges them to pray for themselves and for others ; but He never asks them to pray for Him.

After the request to the Thessalonians to pray for their three instructors in the faith the Apostle seems to take up the pen. This is plainly stated in 2 Thess. iii. 17 as his habitual practice : he writes, not merely the benedictions

but the final salutations also, with his own hand.\* This letter is concluded in the 1st person singular. It is no longer 'we' but I. The salutation in v. 26 and the concluding benediction come from the Apostle singly as well as the strong charge in v. 27.

<sup>25</sup> Brethren, pray for us.

<sup>26</sup> Convey my salutations to all the brethren with a holy kiss. <sup>27</sup> I adjure you solemnly in the name of the Lord to see to it that this letter be read to all the brethren.

<sup>28</sup> The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.'

25. Brethren] See on i. 4, ii. 1.

pray for us] The same preposition as in v. 10 (περὶ ἡμῶν). We have similar requests 2 Thess. iii. 1; Rom. xv. 30; Eph. vi. 19; Col. iv. 3; and what are virtually such requests 2 Cor. i. 11; Phil. i. 19, Philem. 22. Here we perhaps ought to add 'as well as for yourselves'; but the καί which implies this is omitted in some important authorities. Its absence in 2 Thess. iii. 1 might lead to its omission here. Its appropriateness might cause its insertion in either passage, and it has not been inserted in 2 Thess. iii. 1.

Those who retain καί sometimes explain it as meaning, 'as we have just prayed for you,' referring to v. 23. But 'for us also' (καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν) would naturally mean 'for us as well as for yourselves,' and this would be a reference to v. 17.

26. Convey my salutations] A comparison of the other passages in which a 'holy kiss' is enjoined (see below) confirms the impression that the salutation is from the Apostle himself and not from all three writers. It is equivalent to

\* For his habit of dictating his letters see Rom. xvi. 22; 1 Cor. xvi. 21; Gal. vi. 11; Col. iv. 18. Possibly his hands were so stiff with toil, or his sight was so bad, that writing was specially irksome to him. But probably the chief reason was that he could express himself with more freedom when he dictated. His adding a few words in his own handwriting is analogous to our signing a letter written for us by another person. See Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East*, pp. 153, 158; Bevan, *S. Paul in the Light of To-Day*, pp. 53-55.



our "Give my love to all; kiss them for me." And the salutation is addressed, apparently, to all the members of the Church in Thessalonica. There is little to indicate that a sudden turn is made from the whole Church, who are certainly addressed in vv. 25 and 28, to those who preside over it; but it is possible that vv. 26 and 27 are addressed to the first recipients of the letter. The Apostle sends a holy kiss to each Christian, and the delivery of this affectionate message is to strengthen in all of them affection for one another. Similar messages are found in the secular letters of the period.

**a holy kiss]** The use of this special mark of affection (*φίλημα ἁγίου*) is enjoined Rom. xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 12; also 1 Pet. v. 14, where it is called 'a kiss of love: (*φίλημα ἀγάπης*). The adjective or genitive is added to distinguish this kiss from that which is the expression of ordinary affection. We do not know that the use of it had already become liturgical. A century later it had certainly become so; Justin Mart. *Apol.* i. 65; Tertull. *De Orat.* 14 and 18, *Ad Uxor.* ii. 4. It is often mentioned by later writers. See Robertson and Plummer on 1 Cor. xvi. 20; Plummer on 2 Cor. xiii. 12; *Dict. Chris. Ant.* I. p. 902; Suicer, *ἀσπασμός* and *φίλημα*; E. A. Abbott, *The Law of the New Kingdom*, pp. 378 f. He points out that nothing, except Lk. vii. 45, is quoted as showing any Jewish or Gentile practice that might explain it.

**27. I adjure you solemnly]** St. Paul here speaks with full Apostolic authority, and it is the only place in the letter in which he separates himself from his two colleagues and does so; ii. 18 and iii. 5 are not parallel. The expression (*ἐνορκίζω ὑμᾶς*) is a rare one, and it is probably a strong form of 'I adjure' (*ὀρκίζω*), which occurs Mk. v. 7 and Acts xix. 13, and, as here, is followed by two accusatives. There is a remarkable parallel at the end of the Apocalypse of Baruch (lxxxvi. 1-3); "When, therefore, ye receive this my epistle, read it in your congregations with care. And meditate thereon, above all on the days of your fasts. And bear me in mind by means of this epistle, as I also bear you in mind in it; and always fare ye well."

It is by no means clear why St. Paul gives this injunction in such very strong language. It is suggested that he had a suspicion that his statements about the Lord's Coming might be misrepresented ; and 2 Thess. ii. 2 seems to imply that this had been the case. He therefore insisted that every one should hear exactly what he said. Another suggestion is that he feared that the disorderly persons mentioned in v. 14 might try to avoid hearing the contents of the letter. A third suggestion, made by Harnack and adopted by K. Lake, is that there were two congregations at Thessalonica, one Gentile and the other Jewish, and that this letter is to be read to both. Of this Jewish congregation we have no evidence in the letter ; \* nor have we any means of deciding which of these suggestions, if any, is correct.

**to see that the letter be read]** The question is again raised whether this verse, at any rate, must not be addressed to those who preside. There is no 'must.' The letter would be received by a small minority ; and whoever receive it are to take care, not merely that it be passed round, but that it be read publicly to the whole congregation. Subtle calumnies and insinuations had been circulated against the missionaries, and it was absolutely necessary that all should hear the answers to them. There were serious shortcomings in the lives of the converts, and it was equally necessary that all should be warned of them and encouraged to do better. It is not likely that all the converts could read ; probably the majority could not ; and 'read' (*ἀναγινώσκειν*) here, as in Eph. iii. 4 and Col. iv. 16, must mean 'read aloud.' Cf. 1 Macc. xiv. 19. It is of course probable that the letter, in the first instance, was delivered to leading members of the congregation. The question is not of great moment.

It is more important to notice that this reading aloud in the congregation led to certain writings being regarded as of special authority, and became one of the chief marks which

\* Chrysostom remarks that at Thessalonica there were many churches both Jewish and Hellenic : but he is speaking of 'the church' in each household ; Philem. 2.

distinguish canonical from uncanonical writings. We are not to suppose that St. Paul meant that this letter was to be read repeatedly in public worship ;\* still less that he expected that it would ever be regarded as Scripture ; although both these things have happened. See Sanday, *Inspiration* (*Bampton Lectures*), p. 360 ; Swete on Rev. i. 3.

to all the brethren] The Christians in Thessalonica are meant, not those in all Macedonia, still less those in all the Churches. The insertion of ' holy ' before ' brethren ' in some texts is probably an intentional or mechanical assimilation to ' holy kiss.'

28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you] This is the normal form of the Apostle's concluding benediction ; 2 Thess. iii. 18 ; Gal. vi. 18 ; Rom. xvi. 24. He sometimes says ' with you all ' or ' with your spirit ' instead of ' with you ' ; and he sometimes omits ' our ' or ' Christ ' or both. The fullest form is the Trinitarian one in 2 Cor. xiii. 13. The shortest form, ' Grace be with you,' is found in the later Epistles ; Col. iv. 18 ; 1 Tim. vi. 21 ; 2 Tim. iv. 22 ; to which ' all ' is added, Tit. iii. 15. The liturgical use of the ' Grace ' is of course taken from St. Paul. On the other hand the ' Amen ' at the end of it is here, as in most places in the N.T., an addition borrowed from the liturgies. It is probably genuine Gal. vi. 18 and Jude 25.

This concluding benediction takes the place of the ordinary ' Fare ye well ' (*ἔρρωσθε*, Acts xv. 29) or ' Farewell ' (*ἔρρωσο*, which many authorities insert Acts xxiii. 30). Other forms are ' I wish you, or thee, farewell ' (*ἐρῶσθαι ὑμᾶς*, or *σε εὔχομαι*). Cf. 3 Jn. 2.

The subscription, ' First unto Thessalonians,' is a late addition ; and ' was written from Athens ' is a still later addition which states what is incorrect. The letter was written from Corinth. See Introduction, p. xiii.

\* The aorist (*ἀναγνώσθηναι*) could not mean this. Hence there is more point than fairness in Bengel's comment, *Quod Paulus cum adjuratione jubet, id Roma sub anathemate prohibet.*





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